A Quarterly of New Literature

Illinois U Library

ACCENT

WALLACE FOWLIE:
The Child's World in Rimbaud's 'Illuminations'

JASCHA KESSLER:
The Dowry

HERMANN HESSE:
The Poet

KARL E. ZINK
Irony and Social Criticism in 'Billy Budd'

JOSEPH E. DEWEY
BEATRICE E. BODENSTEIN
MARTIN SCHOLTEN

T. WEISS
PARKER TYLER
ROY MARZ

40 CENTS

SUMMER 1952

COMBINATION OFFERS

The Structure of Complex Words

by William Empson.

$5.00 ..... With one year of Accent ($1.50): $5.25

The Poetry of Ezra Pound

by Hugh Kenner.

$4.00 ..... With one year of Accent ($1.50): $4.25

Accent Anthology

A 687-page selection from the first five years (1940-1945), containing otherwise unavailable work by Katherine Anne Porter, R. P. Blackmur, Henry Miller, Cleanth Brooks, Eudora Welty, Delmore Schwartz, Otis Ferguson, Arthur Mizener, Kay Boyle, Richard Eberhart, Jules Laforgue, David Daiches, etc.

$4.00 ..... With one year of Accent ($1.50): $4.25

Contemporary French Poetry

by Joseph Chiari (with a foreword by T. S. Eliot) — studies of Valery, Supervielle, Emmanuel, Claudel, Eluard, Perse, Michaux, etc.

$3.75 ..... With one year of Accent ($1.50): $4.00

In Country Sleep

by Dylan Thomas.

$2.00 ..... With one year of Accent ($1.50): $2.50

A selection from the New Directions 'New Classics' series:

Paterson (Books I-IV) by William Carlos Williams
Miss Lonelyhearts by Nathanael West
Under Western Eyes by Joseph Conrad (introduction by Zabel)
or ABC of Reading by Ezra Pound

$1.50 ..... With one year of Accent ($1.50): $2.25

Send orders directly to
ACCENT, 102 University Station, Urbana, Illinois

CONTENTS

Karl E. Zink: *Herman Melville and the Forms — Irony and Social Criticism in 'Billy Budd'* ____ 131

Jascha Kessler: *The Dowry* ____ 140

T. Weiss: *A Local Matter* ____ 155

Wallace Fowlie: *The Child's World in Rimbaud's 'Illuminations'* ____ 159

Parker Tyler: *Two Choruses by the Clairvoyante* ____ 180

Joseph E. Dewey: *The Tercel's Visit* ____ 181

Hermann Hesse: *The Poet* (translated by S. Leonard Rubinstein) ____ 183

Beatrice E. Bodenstein: *The Feast of Fiction* ____ 188

Roy Marz: *The Bur* ____ 189

Cable to Florence ____ 190

Martin Scholten: *Promenade of an Elegant Ego* ____ 191

EDITORIAL STAFF: Kerker Quinn, Charles Shattuck, George Scouffas, Allen Hayman, Walter Edens, Roberta Scouffas, Sidney Warschausky, David Rudolph. Non-resident: Robert Bauer, Donald Hill, Carl Hartman. Secretarial assistants: Mary Kay Peer, Frances Conlin, Janet Bragg.

ACCENT: Box 102, University Station, Urbana, Illinois. Published quarterly under the auspices of the Department of English of the University of Illinois. Subscription: $1.50 a year, $2.50 for two years in the United States (elsewhere $1.75 a year, $2.75 for two years). Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes. Entered as second-class matter Sept. 26, 1940, at the post office at Urbana, Illinois, under the act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1952, by ACCENT.

18 BACK ISSUES OF ACCENT

On Sale At 15c Apiece — or $2.50 For the Group

SPRING 1941: Katherine Anne Porter, John Crowe Ransom (on Eliot), Otis Ferguson (on Caldwell), Conrad Aiken, Newton Arvin, Ernest Brace, Lincoln Kirstein

AUTUMN 1941: Harry Slochower (on Hamsun), Marjorie Brace (on Julian Green), Robert Fitzgerald, William March, Hans Otto Storm, Clark Mills, Samuel French Morse

WINTER 1942: W. M. Frohock (on Celine), Horace Gregory, Helen Eustis, Allen Tate (on Auden), Dudley Fitts, Kay Boyle, Venard McLaughlin, Richmond Lattimore

WINTER 1944: Levin & Shattuck (A New Reading of 'Dubliners'), Eric Bentley, Jack Jones, E. E. Cummings, Marguerite Young, Denis Devlin, David Cornel DeJong

SUMMER 1944: Cleanth Brooks (on Empson's criticism), Richard Eberhart (on Empson's poetry), Robert Penn Warren, James Hanley, Nicholas Moore, Jane Mayhall

SUMMER 1946: Katherine Anne Porter, Austin Warren (on Lindsay), Grover Smith (on Eliot), Flannery O'Connor, Richard Wilbur, Mina Loy, Charles C. Walcutt

AUTUMN 1946: Boris Pasternak (on Mayakowsky), W. M. Frohock (on Sartre), Bertolt Brecht (2 plays), Louis Aragon, Pablo Neruda, Reginald Moore, John Frederick Nims

WINTER 1947: Arthur Mizener (on Tate's 'The Fathers'), Henry Silverstein (on Hopkins), Mina Loy, Rosalie Moore, R. B. Heilman (on Waugh), W. C. Williams

SPRING 1947: J. F. Powers, Ray B. West (on 'Flowering Judas'), Daniel Curley, Richard Eberhart, S. E. Hyman (on Van Wyck Brooks), Esther McCoy, S. Raiziss

SUMMER 1947: Norton R. Girault (on 'All the King's Men'), Kenneth Burke, Robert Horan, Ruth Domino, Joseph Warren Beach, Morris Emmett, Alfred Young Fisher

AUTUMN 1947: Bertolt Brecht (a play), Frajam Taylor (on Hart Crane), Vernon Young, R. B. Heilman, Wallace Stevens, Nelson Del Bittner, Elizabeth Berridge

WINTER 1948: Wallace Fowlie ('The French Literary Mind'), Lorca, R. W. Stallman (on Kafka), James Merrill, R. L. Cook (on Melville), William Sansom

SPRING 1948: Francis Fergusson (on 'Oedipus Rex'), William Goyen, Klaus Mann, Neil Weiss, Joseph Warren Beach, W. S. Graham, Margaret Webster (on Shaw)

SUMMER 1948: William Sansom, John Waller (on Keith Douglas), Robert M. Adams (on Pound), Daniel Curley, Vernon Watkins, Willard Maas, Mason Jordan Mason

AUTUMN 1948: Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Agnes Macdonald, John Arthos (on Faulkner), Roger Shattuck, Gudger Bart Leiper, Carl Bode, J. Radcliffe Squires

WINTER 1949: Stanley Edgar Hyman (on John Peale Bishop), R. V. Cassill, William Humphrey, Lorca, Edwin Morgan, Rachel Frank (on Unamuno), Leonard Casper

SPRING 1949: Caroline Gordon (on Stephen Crane), Rilke, Joan Griffiths (on Waugh), R. W. Stallman (on Conrad), William Sansom, Donald Jenks, Peggy Bennett

SUMMER 1949: Irvin Stock (on Gide's 'Thesee'), James T. Farrell, Robert Creeley, Sherna Vinograd (on Eliot), William Humphrey, J. R. Shuman, Robert Thackaberry

---

Send for a list of other available back issues
priced from 40c to $1.00

Among the contributors represented: Eudora Welty, Richard Wright, Harry Levin. W. Y. Tindall, Yvan Goll, Delmore Schwartz, C. E. Aufderheide, Louis Pauwels, Jo Sinclair, A. M. Klein, Dylan Thomas, Roger Martin du Gard, David Daiches, Jerome Weidman, S. I. Hayakawa, John Dos Passos, Walter Van Tilburg Clark, Doris Benardete, Josephine Miles, Ben Field, F. O. Matthiessen, Josephine Herbst, Berthold Viertel, Italo Svevo, Arthur Gregor, Marjorie Brace, Bonaventura Tecchi, W. S. Merwin, R. P. Blackmur

Write to ACCENT, 102 University Station, Urbana, Illinois

ACCENT
A QUARTERLY OF NEW LITERATURE
Volume XII, Number 3 Summer, 1952

KARL E. ZINK:

Herman Melville and the Forms—

Irony and Social Criticism in 'Billy Budd'

Billy Budd, Foretopman is a social allegory, the last of Herman Melville's criticisms of social injustice as he saw it in nineteenth century America. His critical observations began mildly and idealistically in *Typee* (1846) with his (for that time) daring denunciation of the Christian missionary in the South Pacific; and they were explicit and dramatic in *White Jacket* (1850) when Melville first symbolized the man-of-war society and damned, for example, the practice of flogging in the United States Navy. His censure of mid-century commercial American society in *The Confidence Man* (1857) was just as explicit, but a new element of irony gave this book a sophistication and power which transcended the raw rhetoric of *White Jacket*. The same basic strain of philosophical irony motivated *Billy Budd* thirty years later. In this last book he resorts to heavier symbolism and irony to dramatize his last charge against the artificial "forms" by which he saw men live blindly and passively. *Billy Budd* is a tragedy of society; not a tragedy of "hope and triumph in death," as Mr. Freeman asserts in summarizing his critique of the novel,[1] nor of "passive acceptance," or "necessity,"

[1] F. Barron Freeman, *Melville's Billy Budd*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948.

as some thirty years of American criticism have uniformly reiterated.[2]

1

Despite its apparent historical authenticity, *Billy Budd* is not a realistic novel of events. It is rather heavy social allegory. The characters and situations operate clearly as symbols. Against the social frame of the ship — the man-of-war society — it develops anew the old struggle between the force for good and the force for evil, with a special ugly twist brought into being (Melville feels) by the inherent evil of the social machinery. Billy and John Claggart are the complex symbols for these forces. Claggart is aggressive evil; Billy is passive good, a comprehensive symbol of the sort of natural goodness that Adam lived before his fall, in large part only the ignorance of evil. He is possibly an agent of Divine justice. Evil in the world has the edge; it enjoys a strong survival factor, not because of greater power[3] but because it is nurtured and protected by the "forms" (potentially evil) by which the culture governs itself. A third symbolic character is Captain Vere, the enlightened mediator, symbol of Authority, who phrases and ponders the philosophical problem involved in Billy's fatal clash with Claggart, but who defends the harshness of the social code as ultimately best for the common good. It is Vere, as much as Billy, who dramatizes the awful power and blind impersonality of the forms. For although he, a *good* man, sensitive and intelligent, is fully aware (where Billy is not) of the injustice of the trial and the execution, he is too enmeshed in the forms himself not to enforce them. His dilemma is, of course, acute — he is many days away from the jurisdiction of the fleet admiral; the recency of the great mutinies is still an ever present threat to all naval authorities. The letter of the law simplifies; it softens the sting to the conscience of disturbing moral considerations. He too dies, soon after Billy, trammelled in his own fashion among the forms. And though Billy's name is on his lips when he dies he apparently does not regret his decision.

A fourth character, apparently overlooked for many years, is the crew of the *Indomitable,* the mass of mankind, dominated easily, often

---

[2] See Joseph Schiffman, "Melville's Final Stage, Irony: A Re-examination of *Billy Budd* Criticism." *American Literature* (May, 1950), for a long overdue re-appraisal of this century's criticism of *Billy Budd,* and a brief analysis of the essential irony of this novel.

[3] Billy always triumphs over evil until he runs afoul of the forms. Red Whiskers, the Afterguardsman, and Claggart are experiences with evil of increasing degrees of complexity. Claggart is his most complex experience of evil short of the social code that hangs him, against which he has not the necessary "touch of defensive ugliness."

brutally, by an authority they have learned to fear and respect. The symbolic behavior of the crew in response to the hanging has been long overlooked. Prior to Billy's hanging the crew do not act as a group; they enjoy no dynamic identity. But the execution of Billy galvanizes them into action and identity. They respond immediately as a mass, integrated by instinctive resistance to injustice. We shall see that in this instinctive, but pathetically abortive, reaction of the crew to the hanging Melville asserts his final judgment of nineteenth century America's dangerously immoral inclination.

2

Through the Christ imagery which surrounds Billy, Melville makes possible many ironic parallels between the story of Christ, fouled in the forms of pre-Christian Roman colonial administration, and the story of Billy Budd, nineteenth century man, helplessly fouled in the social machinery of his own century. In both cases, we remember, a force for good among men ran afoul of arbitrary rules for mass conduct and was destroyed inevitably in the meeting. Both men were accused of agitating, of questioning the status quo. Both were executed as an "admonitory spectacle" for the mob, each a warning against breaking the rules. Both were simple, "good" men, who suffered violent death passively. Both uttered before their death a benediction for the authority they had offended. In both cases an individual was sacrificed to inflexible forms by which men had chosen to live.

Melville deliberately points up this complex comparison with the illusion of Billy's glorification in "the full rose of the dawn" — his hanging is an apparent "ascension," an acceptance, a moral victory. But in the light of the crew's reaction to the hanging and the material presented in the following several chapters, Billy's "ascension" becomes a climactic irony. For the still figure at the yard end dramatizes more fittingly the evil of the forms, the awful impersonality that could thus shove goodness and innocence out of the world; that for the sake of immediate comfort, in order to frighten men into more complete docility, could perpetrate an injustice against man and God. Melville allows the Christ-like Billy to "accept" the necessity of his fate. But we are mistaken if we assume that Melville himself accepted it.

3

Every development which follows the hanging is an ironic comment on that event and underscores the final triumph of the forms:

(1) the unusual behavior of the crew — at the pronouncement of sentence, at the hanging, and at the burial; (2) the "something of a sequel" in the last three chapters, which records the death of Vere, the falsified official account of the story, the history of the spar Billy died on; and (3) the ballad.

(1) This crucial sequence of events begins, in fact, just before the hanging, when Vere summons all hands during the second dog-watch to pronounce sentence. The men betray an immediate, instinctive reaction against his announcement of Billy's fate. But their impulse is quickly overpowered by Authority:

> Their Captain's announcement was listened to by the throng of standing sailors in a dumbness like that of a seated congregation of believers in hell listening to the clergyman's announcement of his Calvinistic text.
>
> At the close, however, a confused murmur went up. It began to wax. All but instantly, then, at a sign, it was pierced and suppressed by shrill whistles of the Boatswain and his mates piping down one watch.[4]

We must note the beginning here of characteristic terms for the description, on the one hand, of Authority, and, on the other, of the unorganized mass: the *dumbness,* the *confused murmur* of the men *is pierced and suppressed* by *shrill whistles, piping.*

Later, only seconds after the awful moment of the execution, with Billy still warm and quiet against the yard, Melville is at pains to describe a second sullen murmur from the men; this too is firmly and efficiently silenced by Authority:

> The silence at the moment of execution and for a moment or two continuing thereafter, a silence but emphasized by the regular wash of the sea against the hull or the flutter of a sail caused by the helmsman's eyes being tempted astray, this emphasized silence was gradually disturbed by a sound not easily to be here verbally rendered. Whoever has heard the freshet-wave of a torrent suddenly swelled by pouring showers in the tropical mountains, showers not shared by the plain; whoever has heard the first muffled murmur of its sloping advance through precipitous woods, may form some conception of the sound now heard. The seeming remoteness of its source was because of its murmurous indistinctness since it came from close by, even from the men massed on the ship's open deck. Being inarticulate, it was dubious in significance further that it seemed to indicate some capricious revulsion of thought or feeling such as

[4] Freeman, pp. 254-5.

> mobs ashore are liable to in the present instance possibly implying a sullen revocation on the men's part of their involuntary echoing of Billy's benediction. But ere the murmur had time to wax into clamor it was met by a strategic command, the more telling that it came with abrupt unexpectedness.
>
> "Pipe down the starboard watch, Boatswain, and see that they go."
>
> Shrill as the shriek of the sea-hawk the whistles of the Boatswain and his Mates pierced that ominous low sound, dissipating it; and yielding to the mechanism of discipline the throng was thinned by one half. For the remainder most of them were set to temporary employments connected with trimming the yards and so forth, business readily to be got up to serve occasion by any officer-of-the-deck.[5]

Again, the instinctive feelings of the group are quelled. Note they are described as *indistinct, inarticulate, murmurous;* it is *the mechanism of discipline* which thins the throng.

When Billy's shotted hammock is dropped over the side a few moments later (all hands called again, this time to witness burial), a third strange human murmur is heard, blended this time with another "inarticulate" sound — that of the great sea-fowl hovering hungrily over the spot, "circling it low down with the moving shadow of their outstretched wings and the cracked requiem of their cries." This motion was seen by the superstitious sailors as "big with no prosaic significance" — nature too rebelled — and immediately

> An uncertain movement began among them, in which some encroachment was made. It was tolerated but for a moment. For suddenly the drum beat to quarters, which familiar sound happening at least twice a day, had upon the present occasion some signal peremptoriness in it. True martial discipline long continued superinduces in an average man a sort of impulse of docility whose operation at the official sound of command much resembles in its promptitude the effect of an instinct.[6]

This time it is the drum beat that dissipates the angry mood of the massed men. The movement is characteristically *uncertain,* but Authority as usual is brisk and sure. For the third time Melville has driven home his belief in the natural though inarticulate revulsion which the mass of men feel against the tyranny of the forms, and for the third time we have seen their vague "murmur" expertly quelled. He is most specific at this point that the average man has developed an

---

[5] Freeman, pp. 269-270.
[6] Freeman, pp. 271-2.

impulse of docility in the face of Authority that is practically instinctive.

Captain Vere immediately justifies the drumbeat to quarters (it is an hour earlier this Sunday morning) as necessary to counteract the temporary mood of his men:

> "With mankind" he would say "forms, measured forms are everything; and that is the import couched in the story of Orpheus with his lyre spellbinding the wild denizens of the woods." [7]

This is the climactic, ironic cap to their *inarticulate* feelings of outrage — this easy, learned explanation, heightened by the classical allusion which betrays the great age of the entrenched power of the forms. For "Orpheus" read *Vere;* for "lyre" read *Boatswain's pipe, drum;* "spellbinding" and "wild denizens" have overtones which are immediately apparent. In the following paragraph the Chaplain conducts the customary morning service, the drum beats the retreat, and "toned by music and religious rites subserving the discipline and purpose of war, the men in their wonted orderly manner dispersed to the places allotted them when not at the guns." [8] Note the terms *wonted, orderly, allotted.* The forms have won out.

4

(2) According to Mr. Freeman's editing of the *Billy Budd* manuscripts the short story, *Baby Budd, Sailor,* ends at this point, the burial, with the men dispersed and quieted. It is thus apparent that even in his initial conception of the tale, Melville included the crew's instinctive revulsions against the authority of the forms. To the novel Melville added three short chapters and the ballad, "Billy in the Darbies." These final chapters trace Billy's story forward in time and amplify Melville's final criticism of the forms. The first of these records the death of Captain Vere in the act of destroying the *Athéiste.*[9] The second records the further triumph of the impersonal forms in the ironic reversal of

---

[7] Freeman, p. 272.

[8] Freeman, pp. 272-3.

[9] The old *St. Louis* had been rechristened *Athéiste* under the Directory. Vere dies, interestingly enough, in the glorious act of destroying the *Athéiste,* a ship fighting in a cause which sought to eradicate a system of entrenched forms. It is thus, symbolically, the "natural" enemy of the *Indomitable* which has just rationalized a shocking injustice to a Christ-like sailor in the name of law and order and authority. We are reminded here of the terrible paradox that the brute *Indomitable* bore the "Minister of the Prince of Peace" aboard, the military chaplain, "serving in the host of the God of War—Mars." "Why is he there?" Melville asks bitterly. "Because he indirectly subserves the purpose attested by the cannon; because too he lends the sanction of the religion of the meek to that which practically is the abrogation of everything but brute force." (Freeman, p. 262)

character and fact which was preserved in the authorized weekly naval chronicle called *News from the Mediterranean* — "all that hitherto has stood in human record," Melville says with characteristic irony, "to attest what manner of men respectively were John Claggart and Billy Budd." For here, it will be remembered, John Claggart was "vindictively stabbed to the heart by the suddenly drawn sheath knife of Budd," whom he accused of "some sort of plot . . . among an inferior section of the ship's company." Because he used a knife, Billy is presumed no Englishman but an "assassin" of foreign origin serving in the English Navy. The "enormity" of his crime and the "extreme depravity of the criminal" are deplored. The exemplary character of Claggart is there said to refute Dr. Johnson's "peevish saying" that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel. "The promptitude of the punishment has proved salutary. Nothing amiss is now apprehended aboard the *H.M.S. Indomitable*."[10] Authority speaks. Through the high impersonality and indifference of the forms to the individual lives they dominate Billy dies unjustly and his character in the annals of men is unjustly and carelessly defamed.

The last chapter briefly traces the history of the yard from which Billy hung, how chips of it came to be cherished as pieces of the Cross, and records the composition of the ballad and how it was in time printed at Portsmouth. But this perspective, too, only reiterates man's subservience to the forms, his docility. This is manifest in the uncritical, paradoxical feeling of the men regarding the rightness of the execution:

> Ignorant though they were of the secret facts of the tragedy, and not thinking but that the penalty was somehow unavoidably inflicted from the naval point of view, for all that they instinctively felt that Billy was a sort of man as incapable of mutiny as of willful murder.[11]

Though they cherished splinters from his spar and in their hearts felt him incapable of murder and mutiny, somehow his execution must have been justified "from the naval point of view." The murmur grows weaker.

(3) There remains the folk record, the ballad, "Billy in the Darbies," which brings Melville's story of Billy Budd to a close. Composed by a watchmate of Billy's (a man who should have known him well), it is said to preserve "the general estimate of his nature and its unconscious simplicity."[12] But in no satisfactory sense does it do this. This folk

[10] Freeman, p. 277.
[11] Freeman, p. 278.
[12] Freeman, pp. 278-279.

record tells us as little about the Billy Budd the reader knows as did the organ of the forms, *News from the Mediterranean.*

It preserves the last reflections of the condemned man on the night before he was hanged (a longer speech than Billy made anywhere in the novel), not his narrative, as might be expected, or any suggestion of his symbolic or spiritual meaning. Rough as it is, there is about it a sophistication, a bizarre humor, grim puns, that no one who knew him well could have attributed to him. Preoccupation with the ugly details of death by halter and sea burial do not bespeak the undisturbed boy who slept like a baby before his hanging. It is even doubtful that Billy ever gave an eardrop to Bristol Molly. The ballad is too passive, for one thing, and too non-committal. If the facts of his story — and his spiritual significance, as well — are thus blurred in the folk mind as well as in the official record, then mankind's immersion in the forms is blind and dark indeed. Something is missing in a ballad which generations of sailors are supposed to have sung in memory of a hero. What is missing, I suggest, is the outraged murmur which sought articulation first when sentence was pronounced, again when Billy ascended to the yard, and again when he was dropped into the sea. No spark of that "instinctive," "inarticulate," "uncertain" but genuine outrage which the massed crew had intuitively felt and abortively expressed aboard ship appears even by implication in the folk record — where it belongs. We should expect their murmur at his death to survive. But it does not. Only blurred, sympathetic feelings survive. Inasmuch as the ballad is no more valuable a record of the real Billy and no more sensitive to the spiritual Billy than it is, Melville's implication, his irony, seems clear. The men were incapable of understanding — incapable of realizing just how rare, and how innocent, and how important Billy was to the ship and to themselves. We know that Authority withheld the central facts. The several mass reactions we see the crew make are all non-rational, intuitive. (The crew's echo of Billy's benediction of Vere is irrational, coming as it does between clear manifestations of revolt.) Because their response to the injustice of the hanging was intuitive and inarticulate, it could be controlled. Melville stresses this. Apparently the men were no more capable of a vital, resistant articulation in words, than they were in action. And thus Authority perpetuates itself. This is the last of the chain of ironies following the hanging which illuminate the brute, insidious power of the forms — the great danger to the individual resident in the machinery by which the group manages itself.

5

We have seen resistance to the forms grow weaker with each remove from the deck of the *Indomitable*. Vere dies convinced that his decision was justified — his last words, "Billy Budd," were not the "accents of remorse." The only official documentary record of Billy's story was hopelessly distorted. His mates, cherishing splinters from his spar, knowing in their hearts he was incapable of murder and mutiny, docilely accepted the penalty as "unavoidably inflicted from the naval point of view." And, finally, the ballad, the folk record, is also a distortion, which betrays subtly the undiscriminating docility of the pliable crew. This is Melville's final irony. The murmur has been lost. The triumph of the forms is complete. And Melville's tragic allegory of nineteenth century American society is finished.

That Billy Budd had to die is to the eternal shame of the inflexible machinery that could shove him off. For it was "the forms" that nurtured and protected the evil Claggart, and an apologist for the forms (Vere) who, fully awake to Billy's moral innocence, condemned the man to die who had rid the world (symbolically) of natural evil. Mr. Schiffman reminds us of the terrible dramatic irony of Billy's benediction of Captain Vere. And there is deep irony in the repetition of Billy's words — "God bless Captain Vere" — by the "wedged mass of upturned faces," the docile crew, inured to passive acceptance of the rules, to worship, almost of their administrators. "God bless Captain Vere" is the last thing they would knowingly have uttered. But with Billy alone in their hearts and in their eyes, their emotional identification with him is so complete that momentarily they too reflect his own special innocence of their true dilemma. The lesson is not that Billy learns to accept the necessary harshness of the forms, but that in their high impersonality there is a dangerous lack of discrimination — dangerous to the individual and to the social structure itself. For in justifying Billy's death, the structure deprived itself symbolically of the force for good. And part of the lesson is that men tolerate this inherent evil of the structure passively, uncritically. Moral integrity is often, unhappily, endangered by or sacrificed to the impersonal dicta of the forms. Civilization has come to compromise men's cherished natural integrity and constitutes a threat to itself. Something like this, it seems to me, is the tenor of Melville's thought in *Billy Budd*. It is ironic social criticism, not acceptance.

JASCHA KESSLER:

The Dowry

In those days a ship's cargo was people. Eighteen million bodies were carried across the sea between 1900 and 1930, having themselves freighted over from the "old country," which during those thirty years was mostly southeastern Europe. Their pasts were dim, reaching not two generations back. The elders had no fine tales of old times.

There is some recollection of a great-grandfather, a mighty man with a red beard, who buried five wives; a poor tailor in the ghetto of Biera-Berzhan who was one of the gang that collected corpses still warm and carted them off to the undertaker's. Redbeard specialized in children: a terrible sight they say it was to see him stalk out of the stricken house with a piteous limp bundle under one great arm, swinging a bottle of vodka in the other, and pausing at the doorsill to tilt back his flaming top to drink to the parents from their gift of liquor. Plied on their rounds, the body-collectors were a roaring bunch; as there was always death, always were they drunk. Should some of the most miserable pay no tithes to the synagogue, their dead were left until dues were done and poultry won to grace the tables of the undertaker's men.

But that is all there is of this red giant. His son, the grandfather, "the Zaydeh," was a tailor after him, sewing for a clientele of peasants their suits made from flour sacks. He too was of great strength in youth: a man who brought the dead weight of flour that made a winter's bread to the house and tossed it into the bin like a pillow. He was poorer than his father since he carried no corpses; so there was, and this is remembered most clearly, seldom a winter's sack of flour. In his time Rumanian soldiers came into this territory and warred over the land of Bessarabia. The Rumanians habitually machine-gunned the people in the ghettoes; when the Czar's Cossacks fought their way back in the country they too machine-gunned them. The emigrants escaped to America; their memories shut away this past, and they came with almost nothing.

The Zaydeh sent his oldest son and daughter over first. When money was sent back in a few years the other children clamored to go, but he said, tapping his chest with his thumb, No. You are staying

here. I am next to go, for if you went you would become rich and idle and forget about us here, and your mother and father be left forever.

He spoke wisely; they would have forgotten him so far off, sure. His sons found it pleasant, so good to walk around New York, free, no jobs, without trades, big radicals, their sisters in the dress factories, making money.

By the Twenties, the entire family had come to America and all the daughters been engulfed by sweatshops, basted with Lilliputian threads into innumerable raiments by the chattering deft machines. Their father was an old man on his arrival, his eyes too weak for his tailoring trade, and himself suddenly too aged to hustle to the shops with his children. How suddenly he declined, withered, and his wife, "the Bubba," with him. Transplantation had exhausted him; or perhaps, like an Old Man of the Sea, he had clasped his legs tightly about the necks of his brood far back in Bessarabia, been carted across oceans with his chattel, to remain seated on their necks in the new world. Though his sons and daughters slipped out of the house to marry one after another, they settled near the old people in flats in the same building or on the next street. One daughter brought her husband to live in one of their rooms. As naturally close they were as seedlings holding tenure in a circle round the bole of an old tree, too old a tree, and they struggled in the master shade for footing, clinging to the great stony roots in the strange forest; entangled; vying with each other for life's simplest portion in this hungry acre.

When the family lived downtown on the lower East Side there was commotion, a houseful of people rising at five and preparing for a day's work, moving around the cold dingy rooms of the apartment in the weak light of the yellow bulbs; noisy at breakfast, crabbing at the efforts of their mother to fix bags of lunch at the pace they demanded. But this bustle died down in a few years. Only the furniture remained, the dirty worn linoleums covering the floor in every part of the place; the mountain of trunks and luggage settling into ruin and dust in one obscure corner of the long entrance foyer where they had been piled in the first days; the massive carved dining room table with its company of stiff-backed knobby chairs, and the tattered satin pillows flung on the swaybacked doublebeds to complete the bedroom suite: bureau, vanity-with-mirror, spindle-legged bench, and extra chair. The windowshades flapped against the streaked panes torpidly; silence drifted through the tenement rooms, condensing on the old people alone among these cheap and ill-arranged things, while the clock in the brass tiller-wheel, held firm in the grip of a brass Franklin Roose-

velt, ticked, ticked time from the dining room sideboard. And the Zaydeh sat and listlessly looked down out the window at the traffic moving on First Avenue; the Bubba lay somnolent on a bed; and the husband of one of the daughters, staying in the room with a glass door, played solitaire all day long.

Until the girls came home. In the family they were called "the girls" not because they were young, but because unmarried. There were two, one perhaps ten years the elder. Because their heads ached they shuffled nights through the rooms with their stockings fallen down around their ankles and lay abed on weekends with white kerchiefs bound by tight knots constricting their brows, frowning.

The older one, Bella, short and somewhat bony, had drawn features, eyes dull brown, and dull brown mousy hair. Her skin glistened. It was oily and pimpled with eczema. She would be rubbing cream on her hands, her wrists. She was a quiet woman; but she could complain morosely how little money her brothers and sisters gave for the old people, though the girls lived with them and had the advantage, as the others said, of the Bubba's keeping house for them while they went to work and made lots of money. Bella's shrewish tongue was a plaint of despond: she still flailed the air though she had long been down and fettered and knew it. Everybody else knew it and wondered how long she could keep it up. Though she was still called "one of the girls" they had no hopes for her.

Her younger sister, Tessie, who said she was much younger, was the glamour girl. As short as Bella, she was raven-haired and plump. Her complexion was smooth, so she used lipstick, very red; she rouged heavily, patted her face with crusty orangeish powders; her black eyes were as a gypsy's should be. She wore tight dresses and high heels, sometimes white socks and slacks with her high heels when she was at the hotel in the country, where she put on a big straw hat and smiled at tall men so that a dimple in one cheek showed. She was what, laughing and laughing, they called "the glamour girl." Tessie went out with boyfriends. She left Bella with her mother and the ancient Zaydeh who sat after supper by the table and said never a word, for all that could be known never thought anything, because one of his eyes was full of blood and hanging out and the other eye just stared, and his lower lip hung down and dribbled onto his vest. Bella would glance at him and jump up with one of her screams, and dab at his shirt.

—Why can't you wipe yourself? Do I have to do everything for you? What are you good for? Sits, and sits, and says nothing ever,

and drips and pees on himself. Why am I stuck night after night? Go to him, momma, I can't stand it!

And then she would go hollering up and down the kitchen while the old people just stared at her, bemused, almost not knowing what ailed her as she gabble-gabbled away in bits of Yiddish. She'd fling out and come scowling back in her stained housecoat with the dirty old clout about her head, and rubbing the creams into the backs of her hands. After a while she just sat for hours looking at them until her parents drifted to bed. When Tessie's high heels slacked up the last stairs to the apartment and entered Bella was waiting for her to say,

—Why don't you ever shut the light and sleep, idiot! Go to bed. Don't sit waiting for me there with your stinking hands. You have to work tomorrow. Then Bella would sneer,

—You go straight to hell. You have to work too.

* * * *

Sundays, the family came together for dinner; all there, daughters with husbands, the sons with wives: none of them had private affairs which could supersede the central family. The three sons brought their own little groups to the board for Sunday dinner. Childless, not absorbed by families of their own, the five married daughters who still went into the shops vaunted themselves as young simply because the girls, being without mates, waned only too obviously. The girls resented their sisters' smugness; it was unwarranted, especially since they were all proving barren. Who were they to be proud? The dress factories had claimed them every one. And indeed, the whole line of sisters was rapidly aging: middle-aged, stout, hair withered like straws, wrinkles and puckers in their faces coming on just like the deep, etched creases of their parents. Almost no longer distinguishable as the children of these parents was the group sitting at the table with them Sundays, but related from their features as siblings all, a single generation of men.

In this acrid atmosphere explosions were natural, a due order. The Sunday dinners inevitably jangled and broke. During the arguments, as always, the Zaydeh sat at the head of the table wordless, breathing hard, in agonies of silence. The Bubba bent over the group wringing her hands, over and over almost keening while the shouting rose, Oi! Oi! kinder, kinder! None of the children heard the supplications of their mother: the noise was about money. The girls worked hard. Why didn't the others contribute to the upkeep of the house? the girls asked.

—Why should we? We got houses of our own to support. You should lend us money better. You make enough. What's bothering you girls? It doesn't cost for the old people.

—Look how big this place is, Bella said. We got to feed four here; with food so high, and gas, and light; and the Zaydeh has to go to the doctor every week for treatments. Why don't you pay for X-rays and medicine? What about his cigarettes and candy that he needs, hah? Nobody gives but us.

—You make enough between the two of you. The Bubba cooks for you and cleans for you and washes your clothes. You got enough.

—Never, they said, never enough money.

It would always come to the same pass: Tessie stood, screwing her face, plucking at her bodice for a handkerchief, about to weep, saying,

—Who told you to run out and marry the first man you laid eyes on, what was burning you? I have to save for my dowry. I'm still a young girl. I have to get married. Who will give me a dowry if I don't save it up myself? Not you cheapskates. You wouldn't give nothing, nothing at all to help anybody.

—Who gave us dowries? they asked.

—So what? Who cares for you? countered Bella. We won't run out into the street and live like dogs first thing. We're going to be decent and have weddings for ourselves like people.

The eldest sister, who had come over first and sent passage money for the others, asked,

—Well, it's about time to have them, no?

—You shut up, screamed Bella. Who needs your advice?

After which exchange the two stomped into their bedroom slamming the door as loud as they could.

—Come on, where's the deck? Hannah said when they were gone. Come on, children, let's sit down and play a poker. Out with the money. Bring a dish for the kitty.

In ten minutes the weekly poker game was swinging. In an hour the girls would be enticed out. They would march to the great table with a haughty indifference and brusquely say,

—Give us seats.

Thereupon Jacob would caution with a wink,

—You better have cash if you want a hand in this game.

So the quarrels ran on. Through the long depression they were forever accumulating their dowries, there was never enough for themselves and the Zaydeh and Bubba to live on. When the depression slackened shortly before the war, the family migrated to the Bronx,

to a new apartment building at the edge of the Park. The girls brought up every stick of their old furnishings. The decrepit kitchen linoleum was ripped from the floor, cut and patched to fit the new room; the bedroom and dining room suites remained exactly in former patterns, sombering new walls to create the dreary former dispositions. Still they clung together, the girls and their parents living on the third floor, the others disposed on various floors above and below in the same building. None wanted the trouble of the old folks staying with them, yet none could bear the accusation from the others of not aiding to support them; thus the old tribute was extorted by the girls. And they would have more: they were living at a much higher rental; everything had gone up and they couldn't manage alone. The others let it ride and sent in their random subsidies for the sake of quiet.

During these years Tessie still claimed boyfriends. Discussion was unnecessary: no eyes were laid on any one of these heroes because she could never get herself engaged. When the war broke, however, things livened up for her at last; she had what the family conceded to be a boyfriend. Who knows? they said; maybe, maybe. Suddenly there bloomed announcement of a dinner. Tessie's man was guest of honor. They awaited him about the table in the parlor, crowded, impatient; each in his best attire: black dresses and dark blue suits.

The spread was simple, indeed meagre for an occasion of such rare importance: two bottles of sweet grape wine, an almost empty pint bottle of whiskey, two plates of heavy dark honeycake, a platter of sorry apples. The Zaydeh, informed that a boy was coming to see Tessie, occupied the head of the table, turned anxiously to each of his children, annoyed by the grandchildren who clattered through the apartment, whooping, sliding over the floors. Tessie sat at the window, aloof; she watched the street while Bella in the kitchen assorted fugitive chinaware into settings clean and ready, scolding the Bubba for this and that ineptness when they blocked each other's way.

The buzzer rang up from the street entrance. Tessie started up and scurried to the bedroom for one more look into the mirror. Her sisters carefully arranged their dresses, patted hairdos into place. They waited for him, composed as stones.

At last he entered, was introduced to the Berawitzes: Private Aaron Goldin. Short, plump, he bulged in his khakis; his hair was blond, almost brown, and he wore a shaggy brown mustache. He was nearing forty; tired red eyes, pouched beneath, lustreless. Tessie seized his arm when he stepped inside the door and clamped herself to him till the moment they should sit for dinner.

The guest was placed opposite the Zaydeh, who, though greeted courteously, answered by a grunt only. After the offspring were herded to the kitchen for their dinner, Jacob, the firstborn, filled with a flourish the boyfriend's glass with the last of the whiskey and, rising with his own, which brimmed with the cheap red wine, toasted: To Mr. Aaron Goldberg . . .

He was interrupted by Tessie,

—Please, Goldin, Goldin.

. . . a long and prosperous good life to you, Jacob blandly went on. Your health, and yours, my beautiful Tessie.

Tessie, mollified, grinned next to Aaron Goldin as the men reseated themselves. Bella, who had already gulped her second tumbler of wine, gushing, broke into a spate of chatter in an attempt to make conversation for everyone across the table.

—Tell me, Mr. Goldin, so you work hard in the army?

—Yes and no, he said; sometimes.

—Do they treat you very bad if you can't keep up with the younger boys?

—I can keep up, he said.

Tessie signaled frowns of disapproval at Bella, who went deliberately on, with a tone, almost, of ingenuousness.

—Is the food good? It's very greasy, isn't it? I hear they make you eat a lot of potatoes and pig. Are they sending you to fight?

While she questioned him she fastened greedy eyes upon him, and while she spoke, unconsciously she scratched her eczema. Private Goldin drew patient breath, deeply, to reply when the Bubba entered with plates of pale yellow chicken soup in which swam limp greens, and served them out in her usual order for the Sunday dinner: starting with the Zaydeh, then Jacob, and running down the sequence of her children; after Tessie she brought a plate at last for the guest of honor. Tessie bit her lip with chagrin. Bella caught this and smiled a thin sardonic smile. Tessie's man was well-mannered enough not to notice any oversight of the old woman's. It was to be expected that such a fellow, if he were truly near engagement to Tessie, would know what dinner with her family would be like beforehand. A mob of sisters casting glances avaricious, critical, hostile upon him; the men eating quietly and drinking, striving to make it good, and failing; and the gloomy bloody-eyed old old man couched opposite from him, snorting sometimes over his meat. Even if Private Goldin had guessed it beforehand, his manners kept his thoughts to himself.

The group was quiet during soup. Next, the Bubba carried in the mainplate of a big boiled rooster, which squatted upon crushed carrots and radishes, enmeshed in feeble celery stalks. The bird was blueish-white with black pins studding its body and half its feathers sprouting from the maimed stumps of its wings. It wasn't well plucked because the Bubba herself had pulled it, and it was exceedingly hard for her to get all the pins out. For years stripping her own fowls as an economy, she couldn't conceive having it done for her for fifteen cents. The two girls were humiliated. Though they had given their mother more money to buy the food for this important meal, she was so accustomed to her frugality she never gave scope to what they might possibly intend when they told her,

—Here's money; buy a big bird. Make enough food for everybody; you hear, *enough.*

Tessie blushed when the monster was brought in, all dripping from the pot, but when her mother started to cut it, picking up the pieces with a corner of the dishtowel because they were too hot for her to lift with her fingers, she couldn't control herself. She rose and roughly shoved the Bubba aside, muttering,

—Get away, get away. Go, bring in the potato-kugel.

The Bubba returned with a great golden-brown smoking potato-kugel that might have set things right. But the damage was done. Bella sniggered as she ate and looked slyly to attract Aaron Goldin's attention to her joke: *Imagine that, the bird's so tough and the carrots so soft, and they were boiled together in the same pot!* Bella was amused, however, by more than this joke it seemed, and by more than Tessie's discomfiture; perhaps her amusement was amplified by the grape wine. Whatever its source, there was no remedy for the laughter swelling in her. The more Tessie glowered, darting curses at her, and the more the others tried to catch both Tessie's reprimands and Bella's humor over the progress of the feast, the less hope there was of quenching her. She was a victim of grand comedy.

As the empty dishes were being collected, distracting the company at the table, Bella looked gravely once more at her sister's man and asked him straight out,

—Aaron Goldin, have you got a friend for me maybe?

Everyone somehow heard her. The room became silent.

—Well, he drawled, helplessly in this appallingly somber room . . . what should he say?

Bella continued without his answer,

—Then the next time you go out with Tessie tell him to go along

with you to meet her sister. Tell him she's got a beautiful sister. All right?

—Bella! her sisters hissed in despair.

Tessie flung out of her chair, plucking at her boyfriend's shoulder. Come! she commanded. The Berawitzes watched him with faces that said, *If you stay we of course apologize for her; if you must get out, well then go.* Tessie pulled at him again, her nails dug into his arm.

—Come!

Aaron Goldin stood up as politely as he could and said as he raised his glass to them, Nice to meet — Tessie tore at him — it's a real pleasure to have met you folks. . . .

As Tessie dragged her hapless boyfriend out of the room packed with grim Berawitzes, through the front door, Bella's suppressed sniggering burst into jagged shrieks of laughter that pealed along the hallways, and rocked with them down the elevator shaft.

* * * *

The family did not scoff, only it knew the way it must be with its girls: their fellows never follow through. Whatever happens doesn't matter; along the line somewhere a rupture is inevitable. The family sense here was final; it snuffled out significances, judged and pronounced even before the fact was born. The family knew the proper end it wished for all things, and contrary movement was nonsense, and partly dangerous — not to the unshakeable family, but to the mover, who by that must lose his destiny. Tessie's liaison with Aaron Goldin seemed set to drag for several years in the customary fashion, Tessie dating week in and out, Bella waiting up nights to be told not to wait, the whole family waiting too all that time, holding its breath, awaiting the collapse of this latest mirage, waiting for Tessie to go on again becoming an old maid: her boyfriends deemed paltry excursions from the road to spinsterhood. However it was made out seriously this time. The man was shipped. There were letters between them. It was rumored possibly, maybe actually, there might come betrothal. Nothing said in words; rather, tighter breathlessness, expectancy in the family. A supreme test had come: Tessie was determined to break the doom forecast by the absolute prescience of her sisters and brothers.

There was a long period of silence. The war ended. The soldiers returned. Tessie's too; but no wedding. Silence. Obviously matters had gone again as the family foreknew, gone as Bella secretly must have wished if she were not to be stranded with her ageless parents, and gone as even the old Zaydeh and Bubba had long long given up speculating or thinking about. What had happened? It was learned

in a general way that Aaron Goldin proposed marriage, that Tessie accepted, and that everything had crept with the tortuousness and mystification characteristic of the girls toward proclamation of this fact. And then, when he asked for her money, her dowry money, to set himself up in business and establish their home, she balked. Tessie absolutely refused to give it to him — her resources were several thousands by then — until after the ceremony was over. So he picked himself up, as they said, and disappeared!

Twenty years those girls had slaved for dowries. The family couldn't help recalling that they would never lend money on account of these dowries. Now the prince himself who came to the lonely place where she was marooned, the last man who could have justified any excuse for twenty miserly years, had gone away because he himself couldn't have the dowry. In defense, it was said he had really cared only for the dowry, anyway.

Tessie never mentioned him. Bella, at last sure that things would be as they must, kept peace too, not gloating or teasing or triumphant towards her bedmate, but benign. She had not been very secure while Tessie fought on valiantly for a cause from which she'd retired. Perhaps she ought to have been out there still too; perhaps it wasn't that Tessie was too obstinate to know when she was licked but saw something where Bella was blind; or perhaps a twist of fortune might throw one slim chance her way. Bella knew these *perhapses* lean, less than worthless; she also knew that they would not fade until Tessie was with her, joined in retirement.

The loss to Tessie was amplified a thousand times by the forthcoming marriage of a cousin much older, who would herself have been called a "girl" if the girls hadn't dubbed her years ago: "the Greenhorn, the Greener." And this Greener was marrying a hackie, a widower with two sons, a man whose short five feet weighed three hundred pounds. But she was marrying; and she had accomplished a complete family of her own with the same stroke! For the girls the last straw; the Greener married! Only Tessie and Bella left, butt of jokes and false pity. The reaction of surprise backwashed into humor: see what a husband the Greener got with her recklessness! Among the Berawitzes no achievement escaped breakdown to its components of absurdity. At the dinner party celebrating the Greener's wedding Bella made herself drunk very quickly, threw her legs upon the table and scratched her thighs and laughed until she fell back unconscious on the couch.

* * * *

The old man, the Zaydeh, died soon afterward, very ill and very unwillingly. One morning at seven he fell on a patch of ice before the Synagogue and lay helpless in the cold for half an hour with his hip broken. By the time he was brought to the hospital and his leg had been set he was very weak: pneumonia. He needed oxygen but fought off the mask crying,

—They will kill me with this; I am afraid of them here. Take me home, children.

The children gathered by turns at bedside for the watches of two nights; they tried to cajole him into having the mask strapped to his head; they pleaded with him, but he refused, though strangling. They took turns holding the rubber contraption down against his face while he wept to be released, and begged for a cigarette.

—Take me home, children, he moaned as he declined. He bled; his nephritic kidneys could not bear the strain of the heavy sulfa doses. As they watched him die, the children about the bed heaved with bitter unvoiced reproaches against one another. They waited for him to cease this frantic clawing at the mask which they must press down on him themselves, while avoiding a father's curse from his bleary eyes: *You are helping them kill me, ingrates. Why do you do this?* At last they must step back and witness the invincible pale nurse bind it to him. The two nights passed; when the Zaydeh ceased to struggle against the mask on the morning of the third day it was no longer of any use to him. At noon he was dead. His children left him then.

For some days after the funeral the family convened in the parlor of the girls' apartment to mourn. As is customary for this first week of bereavement, the rooms were kept dark, no shoes were worn in the house. The more distant relatives and friends came to console, bringing with them gifts of flowers and baskets of fruit, assorted sweetmeats and chocolates. The Bubba was quiet after the first day, for she had not loved the Zaydeh much. Towards the end of this week, the stream of visitors dwindled and the sisters were left together for the long days. They lounged in the stuffy room on orange crates and cardboard cartons, disheveled, tired, cranky. The chat turned itself toward recrimination — the fact of death was so heavy on them, heavier than the accustomed bulk of the living Zaydeh. Hannah, one of the middle sisters, asked Tessie where she'd been when the Zaydeh shuffled out that morning.

—It was so cold, why didn't someone keep him home? Or at least why couldn't you get up from bed to take him down to pray?

Bella, the one most afflicted with tears at the Zaydeh's death, took

her up balefully. She raved about their guilt, everyone sinners, all evil.

—You're all a pack of goodfornothings. Nobody cares about us, about anyone else's troubles. Who ever came up to help us with him, to dress and undress him? Who ever took him to the Synagogue? Where are you all the time? Do we have to sit here forever when we want to go away on a weekend? Who wants to take the Zaydeh and Bubba into his house for a week so we can enjoy ourselves? Nobody! You should drop dead, not the poor Zaydeh.

Bella lost her head; she ran to the kitchen, started hauling china out of the cupboards and dashing it to the floor, stamping it to bits with stockinged heels. They watched the crockery-smash solemnly, then they seized her and put her to bed in a huddle. She remained hysterical for days. When she calmed they saw in her still waters running deep. She had been suffering many years. Though her grievances against them made her sullen, the family eulogized her as "reformed"; they said she had settled down, wasting grief had made her mellow. As if to corroborate their opinion, Bella's eczema subsided beneath her skin. She had recognized officially that the jig was up, seen the soldier's disappointing performance to be the last contact for either of the girls with marriage.

* * * *

When routine re-established itself after the burial of the Zaydeh, the girls became yet more clamorous in their demands on the family for contributions to support the Bubba, though she was less a burden now than when her husband lived. But, since the Bubba must remain with the girls (were they not unmarried, was she not their mother?), since she was the only parent left to the whole tribe, she was dearer to them, and therefore her value as a hostage dearer. Spokesman for the girls was Tessie. Tessie did the talking in the circle, the accusing, and collecting of money for jobs like maintaining the plot in the cemetery, and buying a stone for the grave: a big stone, a carved monument, indeed the very greatest she might have short of a granite mausoleum. Her attention turned to things other than beauty parlors, clothes, the varied mancatching paraphernalia. In this respect she was still some years behind Bella. Now it was Tessie in trouble who refused to admit it, while Bella had slipped away to a serene apathy, neglecting even her shop. When she was laid off, Tessie collared her:

—Out, if you're going to carry on, out of this house! I won't support you. Not one piece of bread for you, if you don't earn it with your own hands, understand?

Bella found another job and behaved herself. She went to work, sat before the sewingmachine as of old, and brought money into the house. But what good was it, if no one had any use for the cash? That account was, if still considered the dowry, rotting in the bank like an unused trousseau, mumbling while it rotted it was dead. The conclusion they made was that it might be useful still: the next anyone knew they were taking driving lessons.

The girls were going to buy a car, an Oldsmobile with automatic shift. They intended to drive it themselves, the two of them, Tessie and Bella in a three-thousand-dollar automobile. This was news as incredible as the announcement of an engagement might have sounded in days of the boyfriends.

—What, is the game over already, no more men? asked Jacob.

—Imagine, children, said another, Tessie and Bella flying in a new Oldsmobile sixty miles an hour for a weekend in Atlantic City! And Tessie will tie her speckled bandana around her head!

The family roared with merriment.

—Impossible, gurgled Hannah, they wouldn't shoot that old dowry gold into a car, couldn't be! And the upkeep! she added.

—But everybody drives today, one observed.

—Yes, they chorused, *but the girls*?

Yet it was true. A new world had opened for the two. If they failed the driving test after five lessons each for fifteen dollars, they doggedly stuck with it until they had had thirty lessons. Another fifty bribed the state inspector who gave them their roadtests, and in the end both received operator's permits in the mail.

Then, their car. Only Oldsmobile would do for them. Tessie did the buying hastily; a few hundred to the dealer "under the table" got them the car they wanted on the spot. Both had chipped-in for it; but Bella came out owing what was given the dealer, so Tessie wouldn't let her drive till she'd paid her share. Talk was no use till Tessie should be reimbursed, though Bella's claim was she could just as well have waited.

—What was the rush? she sneered. What was burning you? You didn't have to run out and bribe the first man you laid eyes on for this car. As far as I'm concerned I own half. Just do me something!

And as far as Bella was concerned she would drive it. She started sneaking out at night during the week, driving the Oldsmobile through the streets fast and half out of control. It was as if Bella, having confabulated with herself, resolved to know herself for dead; from now on she lived her life as befitted her own valuation of it.

But she was not desperate, she had long finished with despair; she was done; nothing signified. In the space of a few months she became as addicted to her night driving as she could have been to no stimulant. After a day of work she was exhausted, but the car fed strength into her. Sleep never restored; sleep had been a waste of tossing, attrition only so much slower than a working day punctuated by the unbrakable staccato machines in the shops. Bent over her Singer all day as the cloth ran between her fingers, or bent over the wheel and steering the great car through the dark with terrific urgency, a road flowing between its wheels, under her legs — no difference to Bella, who steered nowhere in particular down highways and parkways that fed the city: it was all of one piece: the cloth ran and the roads ran.

For her part, Tessie wasn't done yet. She needed that Oldsmobile for trips over the highways to somewhere: to hotels: she was still the gypsy glamour girl, would queen it in her new car to the Catskills or Atlantic City for her dreary vacations, as if not to carry her dowry scrawled in a bankbook, but for once let it carry *her* through the world. It was her last illusion. Whatever toil it cost for years to earn it, she was mothering a good illusion: a solid steel and chromium giant that served her as nothing ever had before.

There were the two of them with the one shining car which rolled through two worlds, utter strangers, visions in strife: Bella driving, driving fast to reach some end of the open road, Tessie struggling to keep from being dragged with her.

Spitefully Tessie rented a garage on the sly and tucked the Oldsmobile away; she was deaf, knew nothing of its whereabouts — unless she was paid what Bella owed her on it. Somehow Bella found out where the car was cached, tipped the garagemen to keep them mum, and resumed her drives.

* * * *

Tessie woke one night starting up, and felt for her sister in bed. She was out again. Into their room gleamed a winter moon spreading cold sheen over the wrinkled place beside her where Bella had crouched and feigned sleep, waiting to find herself once more in the car, facing down the ghostgray roadtop streaming towards her. Rising, angry, Tessie went to the phone (they'd gotten a telephone too when the car came, for they needed no longer spare themselves luxuries). She was told by the garage that Bella had taken the car out some hours ago, just before midnight. She hung up. *That thing found the car!* She crawled back into bed rehearsing the scene there would be in the morning. She'd have no more of this monkeybusiness from her.

Bella's using up the car; some way she's got to be stopped. In a few minutes it seemed, the telephone rang, bringing her out of sleep. Hospital calling. Bella had run into the concrete wall of a dead-end street. The Oldsmobile was wrecked.

Tessie dressed and went out. It was past four. Half the winter stars to the west were still sparkling in the blueblack; in the east most were out and the electric blue from the sky where one or two morning stars hung pervaded the empty streets through which her taxi rattled, making enough noise to wake the sleepers, and the distant dead Zaydeh too. Except for this vague glimpse of the sleeping people who soon must work, she wasn't conscious; ringing in the cold were the shrill echoes of the phone that had summoned her from sleep on this errand. The rest of what there was for her to know struggled to clamber up in this halfsleep as if from an abysm in the mind, but she refused to look on it. She sat in one corner of the cab, frowning, as it lurched downtown.

When Tessie arrived at the hospital, a clear blank dawn-white light was hinted by the skies over the city. Bella was in surgery. Later, she lapsed into a comatose condition. Tessie watched all afternoon; most of the family was with her by then, a circle of people sitting tense on the edges of settees in the lobby of the hospital, gazing at one another, hoping for Bella to mount back to waking. They had been told she would be paralyzed: her spine was hurt. Tessie felt that Bella had driven her to the wall. She was finished; the car was gone and her sister. In the old familiar plaint, protesting, asking, denying, she lamented to them while they waited to hear that Bella was out of danger of her life.

—I told her not to take it out at night. I took away the car from her, she had no right to use it, it wasn't hers; she owes me five hundred dollars. Every night she takes it out and goes everywhere. That Bella, she's crazy, crazy; all night long she drives, all night. My God! she can't keep her hands off that wheel. Look, she's a cripple now. And what about me, hah? My Oldsmobile is gone. Now what shall I do?

Tessie saw the mortification of her sisters and brothers as it loomed, she shared in it as it engulfed their features. She knew what they were thinking because she thought as they did. A swell of self-pity rolled over her; a short swell — the Berawitzes could not much pity anything, even themselves. The pity. Then anger, fury grew in her as she read their faces: she would have the old woman and an invalid sister to live with and support; three alone together.

T. WEISS:

A Local Matter

I

But who does us?
Who flexes like fingers, strains
in our sinews that they sing,
one felicitous agony?
These thoughts, these thoughts
thieving through night that things —
even hope and lust everlastingly
raucous — heckling locals
trying to distract us,
fall dumb.

II

The cat all evening
lulled the mouse, licked it
and pricked it and loved it that
never a moment did it move
out of sight. O the success,
the bliss, the fittingness
of nature there; mouse
recognized its consummation, its all-
devoted, all-devouring heir,
where the future was
suddenly breathless.
Grin, claws.

III

But we, whom do we
play for and what these aches
that carried the night past itself?

The hum of mouths within me:
waters at their loom spinning out
the wild and perplexed
sea, as lilies,
in their velvet toils, break
stones, break stems to a somewhere-
rooted, roar-cored wind.

IV

But you, but you,
enchanting the maddest
din as winter pears can pipe
the speckled curves in scented air
of summer round them —
do you not, like the lady
of the wild things, discover
in your bright bending
wells, by your hand's stir
swell their waters? —
are played by what masterly hand?
Always I hear, in your least
movement, the labials
of light.

V

Always and all ways
the lights grow too strong.
Reach out: the light sweeps us
out into its shuddering darkness.
This by the crackle of leaf
we know mouse; this, cat.
But the clatter there,
the purr? Rapt upon earth
as those transparent monsters,
the winds. Let the ribs
be beaten, let them shriek
like so many women
never escaped.

VI

These the lines
I do not somehow have
to learn; they find their parts
at the moment of burning:
the appropriate pain, the fitting
grief. Meantime I cling
to things that belong:
shag-root of a dog
not the whole world can impress,
the sparrow tucked in the sky
ticking out fall.

VII

And yet the subtle
strings twang into us all;
I think of turtles in a bowl,
their shells like painted shields,
churning upon one another,
each overwrought by private music,
rushing together to one
gleaming doom.

VIII

Now in the lute-time,
soon brute, of the year I
slouch down, the silky lounge
of one in perfect health
(hear the chestnut
gayly crying in its country fire).
I lounge as I wait the advent
of one all sinew and strain,
the lunge. Like a string tautening
to the discords of precisianist
pain, I fit: come, windy
dark, like all the kingdoms
of the North and within the gates
of my Jerusalem set your sundry
singing thrones!

IX

In the state of weeds,
high-spirited undergrowth,
there are many kinds of nests.
Themselves flashing armor and plume
before the shadow coming on
of the long summer light, locusts
clash their cymbals.
Again and again, mighty in leaves
as Nimrod, the mouse enters
that the seasons be maintained
as locally as a broken fence
beside a yawning dog,

X

till I, skinned
and glistening, one of many
hides racked in a row, as a lesser
tale in a greater, from the lean-
to of noon, sink to mouse, catgut,
fiddlings of some nameless bog.
At work religiously, maggots welcome
me passing through, good will
from one end of death to the other,
into and through that the minerals
know me, the odors use me;
how the hum becomes me,
ever and after the household
word of the air.

WALLACE FOWLIE:

The Child's World in Rimbaud's 'Illuminations'

Baudelaire defined genius as the reinvention of childhood, the rediscovery of the child's world where the problems of man appeared first in their most lucid form. The unsolved problems of man belong so strictly to the chaos out of which he comes that the child's naturally chaotic world provides them with a clarity they lose as the experience of childhood vanishes.

Childhood is one of the worlds seen in *Les Illuminations*, seen rather than remembered or evoked, because there had been no time and no experience in Rimbaud's case for that world to have been forgotten. It is remarkably present in him. Eight of the prose poems are transcriptions of childhood, although they do not all represent the same way of considering the child. Two of them, *Après le déluge* and *Aube*, are essentially parables, condensed stories and pictures where a dramatic action predominates. Of parables they have both the picturesque narrative and the deeply concealed significance. They are perfectly achieved unities whose meaning is as endlessly suggestive as their form is precise. Three others, *Enfance, Jeunesse,* and *Guerre,* are more poems than parables. *Enfance* is in five parts, but not dramatically conceived. It contains many themes of a child's vision. *Jeunesse,* in four parts, is a companion piece where the vision is more sophisticated, where the child sees himself as man and the man sees himself as child. *Guerre* might be considered as a postlude on the two longer poems. All three are evocations of the world of childhood. Only one of the *Illuminations* seems to treat the theme of the mother. It is *Angoisse,* centering on the ominous pronoun *Elle*. Two prose poems, *Démocratie* and *H,* reflect the violence of childhood which had served so prominently as theme in Rimbaud's earlier writings. The first is the talk of soldiers as if overheard by a child, and the second is on the problem of onanism.

a. THE PARABLES. 1. *Après le déluge.*

AFTER THE FLOOD

As soon as the idea of the flood had calmed down,
A hare stopped in the clover and the swinging flower-bells, and spoke its prayer through the spider's web to the rainbow.

The precious stones were hiding, and already the flowers were beginning to look up.

The butchers' blocks rose up in dirty Main Street, and ships were pulled out toward the sea, piled high as in pictures.

Blood flowed in Blue Beard's house, in the slaughter houses, in the circuses, where the seal of God whitened the windows. Blood and milk spilled out.

Beavers set about building. Coffee urns let out smoke in the bars.

In the large house with windows still wet, children wearing bands of mourning looked at exciting pictures.

A door slammed. On the village square the child swung his arms around, and was understood by the weather vanes and the steeple cocks everywhere, under the pelting rain.

Madame X installed a piano in the Alps. Mass and first communion were celebrated at the 100,000 altars of the cathedral.

The caravans departed. And the Hotel Splendide was built in the chaos of ice and polar night.

Since then, the moon has heard jackals yelping in thyme deserts, and eclogues in wooden shoes growling in the orchard. Finally, in the budding grove, Eucharis told me spring was here.

—Gush forth, waters of the pond. Foam, pour over the bridge and over the woods. Black shrouds and organs, lightning and thunder, rise up and spread everywhere. Waters and sorrows, rise up and bring back the floods.

For ever since they have gone — oh! the precious stones buried and the opened flowers! — we have been bored! The Queen-Mother and the Witch lighting her coal in the earthen pot, will never tell us what she knows and what we shall never know.*

The flood has restored the world to its primitive innocence. A Franciscan simplicity has descended over everything. The flowers are growing out of the wet earth and a hare speaks its prayer to the rainbow. The poem opens with the rebeginning of the earliest time, with birth, after the waters of birth have subsided. The creation reappears in its original freshness. In the earth the precious stones are still hidden and on the surface of the earth the flowers are blossoming. But suddenly, without transition, a picture of civilization is interposed. A butcher's shop on a dirty street springs up with the same ingenuousness as the flowers did. Blood flows as soon as the waters of the flood are dried. The image of destruction follows that of creation. Three slaughter scenes are evoked: Blue Beard, the butcher, and the circus. Blood and milk, symbols of destruction and birth, flow at the same time. But nothing lasts, not even the reign of destruction. And we see again

* This and later translations in the article are by Mr. Fowlie. In the text he is using — the newest edition of Bouillane de Lacoste — the arrangement of poems is often different than in existing American editions of *Les Illuminations.* (Editors)

order in nature, as the beavers build their dams, and a moment of repose in a bar where the coffee steams.

Then, as if the children were reading this story in their history book, we see them inside a big house. The rain (of the flood) is still streaming down the windowpanes, but they are lost in the pictures of what the world has gone through, as if they had not been born yet, but were still within the warm womb. But the birth does occur, and the child leaves the house and slams the door after him. He is alone but he is understood by the weather vanes and those high points which now dominate the rescued world. From them he can see beyond his city, and his mind moves over the universe, to the Alps, to a cathedral, to a hotel established at the north pole, to a desert of thyme and an orchard. Gradually the spring is coming to the world, and the boy who has just been born, recognizes himself and calls himself "I." A nymph tells him it is spring. The waters rise again, and he calls upon them to form another flood because he has already grown tired of his birth, and of the first order of spring, of the precious stones still hidden in the earth and the flowers that have opened. He has asked his mother, whom he calls Queen and Witch, for an explanation of the world and of himself. But she will not tell what she knows. He will always remain the child for her who cannot know more than the fairy books tell of the earth's creation, of his own birth and of the floods that destroy the earth.

This is the parable of the birth trauma which early childhood spends most of its time recovering from. The flood of each birth resembles the original flood when the world was destroyed and resurrected virginal. But the very virginity and innocency retain a bond with the destruction and the tearing asunder of birth. The child, at its birth, is recognized by steeple cocks, isolated sentinels placed over the world. His mother brews her potion of magic like the witches of fairy stories. She answers him only with meaningless words and recipes. He has to recover alone from the shock of the estrangement. His earliest imprisonment was warm and comfortable and natural. But the same imprisonment is within a house. It is true that the windows stream with rain, as the placenta walls once did, but the mind is troubled with questions that cannot be answered.

The world is a mother who speaks to the poet without offering any explanations of what she says. But even as a child, the poet grows bored with the evasions, with the trickery of maternal speech. His birth is similar to an eviction from Noah's ark. He comes out on the

earth with a memory of cohabitation with all the animals. He can easily imagine himself an animal, a hare, for example, which he might have fondled in an earlier existence, and whose timidity he has imitated. He remembers also the violence of men because he was born in a bath of blood, and blood is the sign of murder as well as sacrifice and redemption. The new universe is hell too. Whom must he kill in order to preserve the life that has come to him so abruptly with the subsiding of the birthwaters? But to kill is to prepare the next flood, the next punishment of mankind. Already he yearns for that renewal of violence and destruction, because death may be the return to the warm safe place he had once known and lived in without the harassing memory of birth and fears of the world. With the terror of birth, there was also the experience of its world and the discovery of a virginal world of spectacles. But a child is not a contemplative. He is a questioner and he can only ask his mother for the secret of the existence she has given him. But the mother is herself so centrally the mystery of existence that she can't answer questions about it. She is life and not its philosopher. The child is as alone as the poet.

2. *Aube*

DAWN

I have held the summer dawn in my arms.

Nothing moved as yet on the front of the palaces. The water was dead. Swarms of shadows refused to leave the wood road. I walked along, awakening the warm alive air. Stones looked up, and wings rose up silently.

The first occurrence, in the path already filled with cool white shimmerings, was a flower which told me its name.

I laughed at the blond waterfall which tumbled down through the pine trees. At its silver top I recognized the goddess.

Then I took off one by one her veils. In the path, where I waved my arms. In the field, where I gave away her name to the cock. In the city, she fled between steeples and domes; and running like a thief along the marble wharves, I chased her.

Where the road mounts, near a laurel wood, I wrapped her in all her veils and felt just a bit the size of her body. Dawn and the boy collapsed at the edge of the wood.

It was noon when I woke up.

The first parable is static. The child is immobilized in the prayer he addresses to the rainbow and in the final question he asks his mother. He is spectator of the world's wonders and horrors. Only

his arms move round and round like those of a weather vane. But the second parable, *Aube*, is one of movement and pursuit. There exists, however, a strong relationship between the two parables. The movement of flight, described in *Aube*, is instigated as a result of the mother's failure to answer the child in *Après le déluge*. As the first parable is related to the trauma of birth, so the second is related to the whole mythology of quest, to the life of man which begins after his birth, in his will to discover the world. This discovery, no matter how objective and geographical it appears, is really the discovery of self, carried out in order to prepare the return home, the return to the mother, or to the origin of life or to the absolute where life began. In this prose poem, the quest takes place in the very specific world of fairy stories, those which might have been told to the boy by the mother of *Après le déluge,* in her role of "queen" and "witch."

It is dawn in summertime. When the story begins, all nature is immobile and still under the spell of night. Nothing moves. Neither the facade of the palace, nor the water, nor the shadows. Only as the boy begins his walk, away from the palace, and as the light of dawn begins to come toward the sleeping world, does the setting become alive magically. His steps stir up the air which is warm and alive. The same precious stones, which had been buried in the flood poem, now look up as they are walked on. The air is so alive that wings seem to rise up with it. This is the scene of the parable. It is nature outside of the palace (of the large house in *Après le déluge*), at first immobile and then gradually beginning to move with the coming of light and the coming of the child poet who is going to seek in the world, by his quest of the world, an answer to his questions.

The quest is initiated and confirmed by a mysterious unaccountable occurrence. A flower, delicately tinted, which the child comes upon in a path, tells him its name. Just as Siegfried understood the voices of the birds in his walk through the forest, a flower speaks intelligibly to the boy-poet. A real communication, or "correspondence," is established between nature and the poet. He knows that he will be directed magically in all stages of his voyage. He can laugh at the waterfall in the pine forest because it is a being for him. At its silvery summit he recognizes the goddess or the fairy queen who is the objective of the quest because she is the source of all knowledge.

But to see the goddess is not to capture her. This is the beginning of the last phase and the most frenzied, because the prey has to be chased. He catches her veils one by one. He hunts her through the

cities and along the marble wharves of the canals. Finally, at the end of the chase, in a laurel wood, he comes upon her and envelops her with all the veils he has seized. Under the veils he can feel her large body. It is really she, but such reality is too great to live with, and the goddess who was dawn, and her pursuer the child, collapse into sleep in the heart of the woods. When he awakens, it is noon. The goddess has disappeared because dawn has changed into full daylight.

Man lives by his questions about life. Whenever he comes near to hearing their answer, he sinks into sleep or rises into rapture or into some other comparable state of which he will retain no absolute memory. The sleep of *Aube* is dreamless because it was the realization of the dream. It is the clear parable of childhood whose greatest moments are so close to the absolute that they cannot be recalled at will. Only the pattern of quest and discovery remains. The great moments of childhood are as memorable as the child's prenatal life, but they are just as subtly obscured. The parable relates also to most games of childhood which are patterns of pursuit and hiding. They are miniature ballets where the one pursued is goddess and girl heroine. To catch her finally is to end the game and wake up in the real world. The games of a child are solemn and ritualistic. They are the first poems of the child. Under their seeming design of chance and fortuitous associations, they conceal a very profound symbolism. The single game of "hide and go seek," of which *Aube* is faintly reminiscent, bears analogy with the Ulysses myth of quest and home-coming. In his first games, the child actively gives himself over to his emotions and re-enacts them in familiar patterns transmitted by the ages. In his later games, which are poems, he re-enacts the same stories by means of the images. Both the games and the images have their origin in the darkest regions of the child's being and memory.

Thus the two parables complement one another. In the first, we see the world from within the house of birth, at a time of great quiet. But the world to explore presents itself in its combined and confused pictures of creation and destruction. The child knows himself to be the survivor of a flood and the initiator of some future slaughter. Then, in the second, the world presents itself in an early morning freshness where the mother image is goddess and yearns to be pursued through all the settings of the city and of nature. The two poems are syntheses of dream and action where no one picture remains for long and where no act is ever allowed to complete itself.

b. THE WORLD. 1. *Enfance*

CHILDHOOD

I

This doll, black eyed and yellow haired, without parents and palace, but more princely than the Mexican and Flemish fairy story. His land of blatant blue and green, covers beaches named by shipless waves, with names ferociously Greek, Slavic, Celtic.

At the forest's edge, — the dream flowers tinkle, burst, illuminate, — the girl with the orange lips, her knees crossed in the limpid flood rising up from the fields, a naked body shadowed, penetrated and clothed by rainbows, flowers, ocean.

Ladies turning about on the nearby sea terraces; giants and children, magnificent blacks in the green-grey moss, jewels erect on the rich ground of groves and thawed gardens, — young mothers and tall sisters whose eyes reflect their pilgrimages, sultanas, princesses of tyrannical walk and costume, foreign girls and some others sweetly unhappy.

The boredom of saying "dear body," "dear heart."

II

That's she, the little girl behind the rose bushes, and she's dead. — The young mother, dead also, is coming down the steps. — The cousin's carriage shrieks on the sand. — The small brother (he's in India!) over there on the field of pinks, in front of the sunset. — The old men they've buried upright in the wall covered with gillyflowers.

A swarm of gold leaves drowns the general's house. They're in the south. — You take the red road to reach the empty inn. The chateau's up for sale and the shutters have been loosened. — The priest must have taken the key of the church. Around the park, the cottages of the keepers are uninhabited. The fences are so high that you can only see the tree tops moving in the wind. Anyway, there's nothing to see there.

The fields roll up to the villages without roosters and without anvils. The sluice is open. Oh! the crosses and the windmills on the desert, the islands and the haystacks!

Magical flowers were buzzing. The slopes moved with him like a cradle. Animals of fabulous beauty walked about. Clouds were massed together over the high seas, made of the warm tears of all time.

III

In the woods there's a bird whose singing stops you and makes you blush,

There's a clock which doesn't strike.

There's a clay-pit with a nest of white animals.

There's a cathedral coming down and a lake going up.

There's a little carriage abandoned in the woods or rolling down the path, with ribbons all over it.

There's a troupe of child actors, costumed, you can see on the road through the edge of the wood.

And then there's someone who chases you off when you're hungry and thirsty.

IV

I am the saint in prayer on the terrace while the peaceful animals graze as far as the sea of Palestine.

I am the scholar in his dark armchair. Branches and rain strike against the library window.

I am the wanderer along the main road through the dwarfish woods. The noise of the sluices covers up my footsteps. For a long time I can see the sad golden wash of the sunset.

I might be the child abandoned on the wharf setting out for the high seas, or the farm-hand following the path whose top reaches the sky.

The pathways are rough. The slopes are covered with broom. The air is still. How far away are the birds and the springs of water! This must be the end of the world, going ahead.

V

Now at last hire for me the tomb, whitewashed with the cement lines in bold relief, — far underground.

I lean my elbows on the table, and the lamp lights brightly the newspapers I am fool enough to read over and over, and the absurd books.

At a tremendous distance above my subterranean room, houses grow like plants, and fogs assemble. The mud is red or black, Monstrous city! Endless night!

Not so high up are the sewers. At my side, nothing but the thickness of the globe. Perhaps there are pits of azure and wells of fire. On those levels moons and comets, seas and fables perhaps meet.

At moments of depression, I imagine sapphire and metal balls. I am master of silence. Why should the apparition of a cellar window turn pale at the corner of the ceiling?

Far more complicated in their form and interwoven themes, are the three prose poems which analyze the world as seen through the eyes of the child. *Enfance* is the most elaborate of all the *Illuminations* and the one which best illustrates Rimbaud's method and experience, his poetics and mythology.

Section I is composed of three pictures, three superimposed "colored plates," which are three imagined and highly colored worlds of the child, totally different from the real world of Rimbaud's Charleville.

First, he speaks of himself directly in his self-identification with a doll, an "idol" that is orphaned and of some strange geographical origin. This is one of the most persistent dreams of the child, to wake up and find himself not belonging to his real family and real country. He would rather be the fabulous child of a Mexican family or Greek than a boy of the Ardennes. This would be a revenge on the tyrannical family and society which misunderstood him. In a far more tragic way, Rimbaud has already stated this problem in *Mauvais Sang,* where he claimed Celtic and Pagan blood, and radical differences of sensibility with his immediate family. Second, he dreams of a girl, orange-lipped and seated in a virginal forest scene, similar to the one described in *Après le déluge*, where the flowers burst with light and where springs add color to the sky and the sea. This is the child's idealization of nature as seen through fairy stories where a lonely princess is always waiting for him. But for Rimbaud the girl princess is always becoming the woman, goddess and mother, the very large female form of the *dames* in the third passage. He sees a whole parade of female figures: mothers, sisters, princesses, lavishly dressed, and some unhappy foreign girls. This is the fairy story society which, despite its magic and beauty, ends by boring the boy reader. The affections are unreal. When the moment of love comes, "dear body" and "dear heart," the story has lost its meaning as the game of pursuit collapses when the pursued is caught.

Section II is a further synthesis of the fairy story world. It starts as a story about a little girl dead behind the rose bushes. The members of her family are evoked in strange unexpected places. By the end of the paragraph we have moved outside of the story to the more familiar landscape of Charleville, to the ramparts of Mézières covered with gillyflowers where old men are buried upright. The rest of the section is more purely descriptive and more easily applicable to the Ardennes. The general's house mentioned might be that of General Noiset who lived near Charleville and whom Delahaye reports he and Rimbaud used to visit. Delahaye also claims that he and Rimbaud used to pick gillyflowers on the ramparts. Everything is empty and desolate: the inn, the chateau, the church, the keeper's cottages in the park. Even the little villages have no cocks and no anvils. The sluice is opened. The death of the little girl, announced at the beginning, has drained the countryside of all signs of life. Death is not visible but it is felt everywhere. Each element of the final sentence stresses this desolation: the calvaries, the mills that belong to the desert, the islands and the

haystacks. Into these three paragraphs Rimbaud has poured all his memory of landscapes under a spell and emptied of life, of landscapes awaiting their deliverer and their transformation. He is preparing for the three subsequent passages which are the resurrection of the bewitched land.

The beginning of the change, a few lines at the end of part II, is in the flowers humming with insects, and in the magnificent beasts moving about. The poet refers to himself for the first time and unostentatiously by the pronoun. "The slopes moved with him . . ." Only after the coming to life, in part III, of certain elements of the landscape, will he name himself and his roles in part IV. Magic controls the coming to life in part III where the song of the bird makes you blush. Everything seems directed by a stage mechanic. The clock doesn't strike. The clay pit is singled out because of its nest of moving white animals. A cathedral drops out of sight as a lake appears. This is the magic of the stage and of fairy stories. A carriage bedecked with ribbons rolls down the road as up it come a troupe of actors in costume. The new world is so complete that when you want to commit a crime, such as steal food and drink, there is some one to chase you. What the child wants he calls upon and then discards rapidly. What is real remains so only for a moment and then is hoisted out of sight.

With part IV the serious game begins. After the inventories of settings and backdrops where the child poet imagines the world unfolding before his eyes, come the reincarnations. He becomes successively the characters he has read of in his stories. He is the saint, first, at prayer in the midst of nature. Then he is the scholar in his library, and the pilgrim (combining both saint and scholar) who is familiar with sunsets and the roar of opened sluices. The role of the abandoned child and the vagabond is the last of the repertory and the one which Rimbaud had known literally. The real world of Charleville is always encroaching upon his poet's consciousness and demonstrating its claim on his poet's creation. The role of the boy vagabond and the rampart gillyflowers are autobiographical elements, as are the subsequent paths, hillocks, broom and springs. The drama of flight and the varied characterizations suddenly collapse into a dream of nostalgia. One reaches the end of the world by going ahead. At the end is the beginning. After the fairy landscapes, the ramparts of Mézières.

Almost impatiently the fifth and last section begins with a prayer for enough magic to rent a tomb deep underground, white-washed.

Enough of expansive sites and exaggerated roles: What the poet wants now from the world is a small warm enclosure underground. By the magic of words he creates it for himself and takes up his abode. There he sits at the table, lighted by the lamp, and pours over newspapers and vapid books. Far overhead, he imagines the city with its houses, its mud, its night, its monstrousness. Very high up are the gutters, and beside him lie wonders he willingly imagines: azure pits and walls of fire. There meet all the elements of his dreams: moors and comets, seas and fables. When the contentedness of his underground retreat turns to bitterness, he imagines balls of pure sapphire and metal. With them he is master of silence. Yet even this mastery is doomed to failure. On the vaulted ceiling over his head something white glows, a spot marking a cellar window opening out to the world above. In an earlier poem, *Les Effarés,* this same object, a *soupirail,* had been used, but then, five children had crouched outside it to look in at a baker making bread. Now the process is reversed (as C. A. Hackett has pointed out) and the boy-poet is safe within the warmth of the earth. He is experiencing the security of mother-earth and food after having looked longingly at it on the other side of the *soupirail.*

The prose poem *Enfance* traces the poet's passage through three major kingdoms of his childhood: the scenes of fairy stories which are called up and dispelled by magic, where the boy plays many roles; literal fragments of the Ardennes which Arthur knew and walked over; and finally the subterranean warmth of mother love, imagined as a whitened cell always threatened by a possible opening out on to the world where he would have to break the silence so totally established in the womb.

2. *Jeunesse.*

YOUTH

1. *Sunday*

When homework is done, the inevitable descent from heaven and the visitation of memories and the session of rhythms invade the dwelling, the head and the world of the spirit.

—A horse scampers off along the suburban turf and the gardens and the wood lots, besieged by the carbonic plague. A wretched woman of a melodrama, somewhere in the world, sighs for unlikely desertions. Desperadoes sulk for storm, drunkenness, wounds. Little children stifle curses along the rivers.

I must study some more to the sound of the consuming work which forms in all the people and rises up in them.

2. *Sonnet*

Man of usual constitution, wasn't the flesh a fruit hanging in the orchard? — O childhood days! — wasn't the body a treasure to spend? — wasn't love the peril or the strength of Psyche? The earth has slopes fertile in princes and artists, and your descendants and your race urged you to crimes and mournings: the world, your fortune and your peril. But now, this work done, you and your calculations, you and your impatiences, are only your dance and your voice, not fixed and not at all forced, although a reason for a double event of invention and success, — in brotherly and discreet humanity throughout the universe without pictures. Force and right reflect the dance and the voice which are now only appreciated.

III. *At Twenty*

Instructive voices exiled . . . Physical ingenuity bitterly put in its place . . . Adagio. Ah! the infinite egoism of adolescence, the studious optimism: how full of flowers was the world that summer! Melodies and forms dying . . . A choir, to pacify impotency and absence! A choir of glasses, of night tunes . . . Yes, one's nerves go out quickly to hunt.

IV.

You are still with the temptation of St. Anthony. The struggle with diminished zeal, grimacings of a child's insolence, collapse and fright. But you will begin this work. All chances of harmony and architecture will rise up around your seat. Perfect and unpredictable beings will offer themselves for your experiments. Around you the curiosity of ancient crowds and idle luxuries will move in dreamily. What will happen to the world when you leave it? Nothing, in any case, of what is now visible.

The four short pieces of this prose poem are related by their style and genre. They are condensed serious meditations, almost philosophical in nature, and appear far less successful as pure poems because they are so anguishingly personal. They are courageous notations on the experience of childhood, and are so full of suppressed tragic feeling that the poet must, momentarily in writing them, have gotten beyond their experience in order to see them in something like their entirety and their significance.

Dimanche is a Rimbaud theme already noted in the poem, *Les Poètes de Sept Ans*. Here it is less directly autobiographical and more movingly universal. When the child puts aside his homework, his mind, like the house he is in and the cosmic mind of the world, be-

comes filled with thoughts which he describes as a rushing down from heaven (like the illuminating messages of the holy spirit) and with memories which come to him as if they were Sunday visitors, and with pure rhythms which persist and beat in him as if they were settling down for a long stay. Then, as if the thoughts suddenly crystallized into images, four slight visions pass over him: a horse running in the countryside, a woman character from a play sighing over the desertion of her lover, bandits yearning for blood and action, children stifling their curses as they walk along rivers. These are the images which form in the boy's mind noisily whenever he interrupts his homework on Sunday afternoon. So he returns to his book and his sums in order to extinguish the sights and the sounds of his dreams.

Sonnet, the second part, is a far more intricately composed piece, in which the boy sees himself growing into a man. He fears reaching only an ordinary size. His body appears to him as a fruit hanging in an orchard. During the days of its youth his body is a contained useless treasure. It symbolizes love, the peril and strength of Psyche, who can be loved. Youth is here the period of waiting. At a distance on a hillside there is evidence of fertility in the princes and artists. To see them and to feel relationship with them force the boy to ideas of crime and death. They tell him that the world is fortune and peril, and he wants to make it his fortune and his peril. But his problem is what to do with the present. What he accomplishes and knows in his present: his sums and his impatience, are only his dance and his voice, not fixed and not forced, although strength and justice reflect the dance and the voice which are merely appreciated at this early time. The universe of this waiting is pictureless.

Sonnet is the unified condensed picture of the body waiting in the midst of a discreet humanity for some way to reveal itself and lavish itself. Dance and poetry (voice) would be two means for this giving of self which youth, more than anything else in the world, wants to accomplish. This is a deeper and more silent meditation than the Sunday pictures which intervene to disturb the boredom of homework.

Vingt Ans, part III, is briefer and more mysterious still in its allegations of twenty years. By this time, the school lessons are like voices that have been exiled. His physical innocency, after so much time, has turned to bitterness in its accustomed complacency. Adolescence was a period of endless egoism. Its studies nourished its optimism and its ambitions. That was the season when the world was flower-laden. But now the bitterness has turned to a sense of impotency and solitude.

The sounds in the world are of drinking glasses at night and only his nerves seem alert for quest. This is a poem on the failure of experience.

The last section, unnamed, is summary of the poem and a candid self-inquisition. The poet turns on himself in a bitter stock-taking and a denunciation of Anthony, which I take to be the temptation of the flesh. But in its already long life the temptation has shortened the boy's religious zeal, has induced nervous mannerisms of youthful pride, as well as a physical weakening and terror. What has to be done is to embark upon another temptation, the pure dream of the future where all harmonies and architectures will gravitate around him. New beings who are perfect in their way and unexpected will enter into his experiences. From the past will come the experiences of idle curiosity and luxury. He will be achieved as a creative poet, and his memory and his senses will serve him as a poet. The world, then, will be different, and will have nothing of its present appearance.

After the bitter dreams of the Sunday child and the fears of growing into an ordinary man and the tedium of prolonged innocency, the poet turns deeply inward, to conjure up the most delirious dreams of what will not happen and what the endless dreams of youth are composed of.

3. *Guerre.*

WAR

> Child, certain skies have refined my vision. Their characters cast shadows on my face. All phenomena grew excited. — And now, the everlasting inflexion of moments and the infinity of mathematics hunt me throughout the world where I experience civic popularity and am respected by strange children and overpowering affections. — I dream of a War, of justice and power, of unexpected logic.
>
> It is as simple as a musical phrase.

The child poet speaks to the child he is, but with the wisdom that surpasses that of the sage in its puerile vision. He sees, not morally and philosophically as a sage, but because of the light of certain skies. His face has been modeled and colored by the multiple skies as if each one were a character imprinting its trait on the upturned face of the child. To see this miracle, all the phenomena of nature rejoiced. That was his fatality, the coloring of the sky and sky's endless repetitions. But in the period after childhood, the purity of those moments and the infinity of their vision sent him through the world where he has been

respected by childhood and the affection of parents and where he has known civic triumphs. The world into which the purity of childhood sent the poet is by comparison a disappointingly strange experience. His thoughts lead him to some image that would upset the tiresome logic of the world, and it is War he dreams of, a war of justice or of conquest that would not be reasonable. It would be as simple as a musical phrase following an ordinary experience in order to decorate and conclude it.

Guerre is half-abstraction, half-parable on childhood in the dichotomy the experience creates between the dream and the real world. The child is the beginning of the pure hero endowed with a kind of sight which familiarizes him with infinity. The real world, when he walks through it as a young man, will appear by comparison reduced and trivial. The genesis of war may have something to do with the attempt to enlarge the world by destroying it, and make it resemble more clearly the expansiveness of the early vision. War would be like an act of magic, a transformation brought about by the utterance of a phrase, of a simple melodic line.

c. MOTHER. *Angoisse.*

AGONY

> Can she have me pardoned for my ambition so everlastingly repressed? Can wealth at the end of my life pay up for my years of poverty? Can one day's success put me to sleep on the shame of my fatal awkwardness?
>
> (Oh! palms and diamonds! Love and power! higher than joy and fame! — at any rate, everywhere, a demon and a god, myself the youth of this being!)
>
> Can accidents of scientific fantasy and organizations of social brotherhood be cherished as the progressive restoration of original innocency? . . .
>
> But the Vampire who makes us behave, stipulates that we play with what she leaves us, or otherwise we'll be queerer.
>
> Let me roll in my wounds, through the heavy air and the sea, in my pains, through the silence of water and the harmful air; in the tortures which jeer at me, through their fiendish and billowy silence.

This is the only illumination which seems to be specifically on the subject of Rimbaud's mother. Despite the title of "Agony," the emotional aspect of the piece is controlled. As with most of the *Illuminations*, the experience is recast in images and abstractions. The lines have a deliberate clarity.

The capitalized pronoun *Elle*, with which the poem begins, might of course refer to *Angoisse*, but in the light of the piece as a whole, and especially the fourth paragraph, it is quite believably the mother. The same pronoun had stood for her in *Mémoire* and *Les Poètes de Sept Ans*, and moreover, the equivalence between "anguish" and "mother" would not be difficult to establish in Rimbaud's case. The three firm statements of the opening sentence, phrased as half-questions, are succinctly related to Rimbaud's life at home. Will she pardon, he asks, his ambitions which had been continually stifled? Will a comfortable ending of his life replace the early poverty? (This preoccupation with money is going to increase during the years after *Les Illuminations*. The tendency to avarice, apparent in Rimbaud's early years, becomes stronger with time.) Will some final success, he continues to ask, obliterate his fated awkwardnesses and failures? In *Une Saison*, Rimbaud had spoken of his lack of manual skill and performance, of his peasant origins.

Then, in parentheses, as if this mention of early ambitions and hope for ultimate successes suddenly flowered in him, he sings ecstatically, by aligning one substantive after another, of the dreams of his youth. They stand in groups of two, one complementing and expanding the other, and crowning the ego of the poet, *moi*, which concludes the enumeration.

After the parentheses, a fourth question is phrased, heavy this time with a pedantic vocabulary, but significant in its relation to all the *illuminations*. The poet asks whether his early candor of a child in the ambitions which drugged his mind, will be justified and supported by a love of the world as he grows to know it, and by the magic of poetry as he grows in the mastery of language. He claims that as the child becomes an adolescent, the innocent native frankness should be restored in its newer forms of poetry and love of mankind.

This has been a long question in its four parts and parenthesis, and now in the form of answer, the poet speaks of the female figure as a Vampire and of her role in his life of child and adolescent. Her effort during the early years had been to make him be "a good boy" and behave (*gentil*), and now that she is no longer present, she orders him to continue playing with what she left him, or if not, he will become "queerer." This is strong indictment against her. The mother is vampire who first bewitched and subjugated the child and who even after childhood is over, continues to exert her influence. The games of good behavior and obedience can never be abandoned. If the

maternal constrictions are neglected, the boy is destined to turn out a "misfit," *drôle*, a word already used in the phrase, *Drôle de ménage!* to designate the London-Brussels relationship of Rimbaud and Verlaine (*Délires I*).

What "she" created in him and wants him to continue with, is his mediocrity and his passive obedience. To remain obedient is a form of anguish, and to try to escape, may be to experience even greater anguish. The final paragraph, a versicle, seems to announce precisely that. An escape, by water, for example, would be simply to move closer to suffering and to torture. *(Rouler aux blessures, par l'air lassant et la mer.)* The syntax doesn't create out of this idea any firm statement. The verb, *rouler*, is in infinitive form and indicates that this may be fate and the way open to the poet.

d. VIOLENCE. 1. *Démocratie.*

DEMOCRACY

"The flag suits the filthy landscape, and our patois drowns out the drum.

"In the centers we'll feed the most cynical whoring. We'll cut down all logical revolts.

"To the countries spiced and dried up! — in the service of the most monstrous industrial or military exploitation.

"Goodby here, anywhere at all. We conscripts of good will are going to have a mad philosophy: ignorant in science, malicious for comfort; and let the world blow up! This is the real march. Forward, men!"

The theme of violence and revolt, so persistent throughout the early poems and *Une Saison*, is only intermittently audible in *Les Illuminations*. *Démocratie* is the one prose poem, composed in one coherent tone, which recalls the earlier truculence of social opposition, of ironic portraiture of social types, of revolt against the established order.

The entire piece is spoken by soldiers who combine in their makeup brutality, obscenity and a somewhat startling degree of pedantry in their verbal expression. They are really Rimbaud the scholar in one of his many roles. The title "Democracy" seems to apply more to the democratic spirit in the troupe than to the country's government.

The filth of the flag, they say, is quite in keeping with the filthy landscape, and their patois speech is loud enough to drown out the drums as they march along. These are mercenary soldiers, or soldiers of fortune, bent on promoting prostitution in the large cities and

putting down any well-organized sensible revolutions. They will serve whatever is monstrous, war or industry. Their creed will be brute strength. Their comfort is of prime importance and the welfare of the world through which they move is of no importance.

This is a stylized picture of the soldier, unscrupulous and coarse, who projects the child's scorn for order and organization. To massacre and thieve for oneself makes more sense than to sacrifice oneself for a cause. The word "monstrous," placed in the center of the poem, dominates it. The goal of the soldier is to create in himself a high degree of inhumanity. This is also the mask of the boy-poet who, unable to correct the evils of the world, can at least attempt to annihilate part of the world. The theme of destructiveness in *Les Illuminations* is usually associated with the motif of the monstrous. Here, in *Démocratie*, everything is monstrous: the flag, the speech of the soldiers, the lands that are drenched in water, the philosophy of the enlisted, and the final picture of the world's collapse.

2. *H.*

> All forms of monstrosity violate the terrible gestures of Hortense. Her solitude is erotic mechanics; her weariness is the dynamics of love. Under the guardianship of childhood, she has been, in countless periods of time, the passionate hygiene of races. Her door is opened to poverty. There the morals of real beings degenerate into her passion or her act. O atrocious thrill of new loves on the blood ground and in the white air! Find Hortense.

This may well be the most subtly conceived *Illumination* and one of the most poignant in terms of childhood.

The single letter which serves as title and as initial of a girl's name, Hortense, indicates a mysteriousness of code. The last two words, *Trouvez Hortense*, interrupting the tantalyzing description, give the poem its form of guessing game or charade. All poems are to some extent charades, where a multiplicity of words and actions conceal a single word and a single experience, but *H* is especially that, and the poet invites discovery. He defines elaborately with an eye to mystification and a will deliberately to obscure. And yet when the right answer is found, all the parts should be suddenly "illuminated" and childishly obvious.

Again here, as in *Démocratie* and in so many other *Illuminations*, the word "monstrosity" is important and pervades much of the poem. Every element of the portrait and "case history" is sibylline. We are

not told what her gestures are, save that they are atrocious. When her solitude is described as "erotic mechanics," the first clue is given. But the mysteriousness is recaptured, when the girl is associated with many periods of time and is made synonymous with the ardent hygiene of races. She must be more than a girl and a single figure. She must be more than the protagonist. She seems to precede and surpass in her passions and her actions the contemporary figures, the poet himself. The final sentence is the most terrifying and obscure of all, but the qualifying adjectives point out the solution. The loves that have been described are those of a novice. The ground on which they transpire is bloody. And the hygrogen air of the atmosphere is illuminated.

At first the poem would seem to describe the life of a prostitute, but Hortense is so imaginary and is seen through such a distance in time and space, that finally it becomes apparent that she is the erotic vision of the onanist, of the boy-poet forcing a union between his fantasy and the dynamics of his body. Such an act was for certain tribes a performance of racial hygiene (as Etiemble points out in his book on Rimbaud). The artifice of solitude is the betrayal of love. What is terrifying is the self-pity in the poet and the ineluctableness of the act which seems to join him with the principle of creation and procreation. The narcissicism of Rimbaud is here androgynous. He dreams of Hortense and becomes her. The mystery of the poem comes precisely from this identification of the poet and his dream-fantasy. He is what he loves. This process is as magical as the creation of a poem by means of poetic alchemy. The little girl with whom he fought lasciviously in *Les Poètes de Sept Ans* is now Hortense, unnamed (*H*) and unformed because she is really the poet for whom the solitary sexual act is a mortification of the flesh, a personal mode of asceticism.

There is a price to pay for the visions of the poet. The exercises of the seer are exacting and relegate him to the blind in the world, to those who cannot see the real world. In the same way, the onanist provokes the visions of love draining off from himself the potencies of his body. He is the perverse ascetic, engaged upon all the practices of fasting and labor and vigil in order to prolong in himself the illusion of being god. A boy such as Rimbaud has to become god before he becomes man. His soul has to become monstrous, with full knowledge of criminals, with total adjustment to all poisons, before he can hope to transcend all periods of history in order to become a man of his own age, humbled with the new knowledge of his finiteness and his weakness.

Hortense, with its mysterious letter *H*, is Rimbaud's version of the myth of Hyacinthus, with its counterpart *H*, and with its comparable story of blood and sacrifice. Hyacinthus was a youth loved by Apollo and accidentally killed by him. From the blood that flowed, Apollo caused a flower to spring up. Hortense is also a flower (hydrangea), growing up from her own blood spilled on the ground. The race is renewed in every act of procreation and in every created poem. The answer to the riddle: *trouvez Hortense*, is the flower resurrected after the sacrifice, the flower that is both boy and girl, lover and god, victim and progenitor.

These eight *Illuminations* narrate in their own quality and power of poems the adventure of the first part of life. It is a story of existence extending from the brilliant parable of birth trauma (*Après le déluge*) to the dream-fantasy of Hortense. They represent the two extremes of the child's world, the two extreme forms of his solitude, his first aloneness in the womb and the later aloneness of sexuality. Between the two experiences of himself, the one barely remembered and the other frantically dreamed, are crowded together in close juxtaposition one scene after another, each one significant in itself and startlingly revealed in its relations to the others. The purity of dawn *(Aube)* describes the drama of quest, but at the precise moment when the world awakens to the child after his long sleep in the womb. The family *(Enfance)* is seen magically transformed into the families of fairy stories, where the death of a child stops everything and the world undergoes its changes to create the settings necessary for the varied roles imagined by the boy who has read the stories. The dreams of the boy about the man he is to become succeed rapidly to the static fairy story world. Temptations besiege him now and ways to realize the temptations. The main obstacle to this dreamed-of growth and emancipation is the mother, ever present, ever large. Yet there is, intermittently, escape to worlds outside of him, when the mother-obstacle can be overcome by giving full expression to his feelings of violence. He wills, at least imaginatively, to mingle with a troupe of soldiers who sing and do everything that is non-feminine, non-maternal.

It is the world of two quests, the one downward and inward, secretively personal; and the other, upward and beyond, histrionic and worldly.

The first is the theme of refuge. It is Arthur's room in *Les Poètes de Sept Ans*, which is, especially, the white-washed tomb underground,

warm and pure, closed off from every other place. The poet encourages the creation and perpetuation of warm atmospheres and rooms which are closed worlds in themselves, miniature fortresses of security.

The second is the opposite of security. It is the theme of departure and flight where the poet is the pedestrian or the abandoned child *(Enfance)* and where the scenes are outside. In the "refuge" poems, he hears the mother's heart beating close to his, but in the "flight" poems, its noise expels him. The two impulses are extreme and antithetical. They represent a full development of the deluge trauma and the Hortense fantasy. To the terrible nostalgia for warmth and immobility, succeeds the need for movement, action, conquest. The transition between the two moods is made almost magically, with the wave of a wand. The closed-in warm places are transformed into open places, roads and paths, for the liberation of the spirit. The two moods are reflected in the early poems, in *Les Poètes de Sept Ans* and *Bateau Ivre,* and they are continued in *Les Illuminations,* contraposed more rapidly and more magically than ever. Either the world must hide him or stretch out before him, in all its monstrous forms of cataracts and storms, to be assaulted and conquered. The experience of immobility is a deepening of thought, a self-hallucination, where scene after scene lights up and comes to life.

But the two moods can finally be seen as one, or at least as closely interrelated. Passivity is replaced by action for greater self-knowledge, for a richer return afterwards to a deepening of self. At the end of the violent action of *Aube*, the child falls asleep in the depths of the forest. It is not enough merely to come to the body of his desire and embrace it. The exhaustion of such an experience plunges him into a sleep of such oblivion, of such closeness to his primal being, that he awakens in a new full light of knowledge. The hour of noon is plenitude and full light. Only the hunt at dawn and his grappling with the huge goddess will permit him such sleep and such a luminous awakening.

PARKER TYLER:

Two Choruses by the Clairvoyante

From a novel in prose and verse:
The Clairvoyante and the Crime

I

Ever in man's fist or on the breast hanging: the fetich, the charm, the rib of a saint or his ashes, safe in an amulet:
The sign against evil: the horns against horns of the Devil:
The Host itself, blessed and reblessed, the wafer blessed for the body, the wine blessed for the blood:
The Crucifix, no wider than finger, golden, waved in the face of the Devil, only too eager to kiss it, using only lips as a weapon: resurrecting in flesh the spirit, in spirit the flesh: a giddy round:
Doffing his mask to show the lover's mask: behind the lover's mask, the skeleton, and behind the skeleton, the mind's wraith: and pulsing amid all, the astral body, omnivalent, invisible . . .
Not a mask for the Void, the Nothing, but the Void only mask for Body without limit, the Body whose matter is sin, dying in arrested motion . . .
Lips on lips: roof and foundation for the tomb: tongue through lips: digging the body's grave in the flesh's cave: darting, darting: infinitesimally rainbowed . . .
Living light in the body's black: the *long* kiss . . .

II

Woman the black: woman the movement incarnate: woman, perennial maya, double-breasted illusion: the blind carriage:
Goddess of elementals: Kali, Kali the Black One: tinted with night-tint, night-white and moon-savor:
Bare foot, bare buttock, blind in the navel, cruel as the first and last earth-cluster: shaped vast and milky, blacker in the shade, feet pounding on Shiva-Shava:
Shiva the living man, Shava the dead: Shiva the god-man, Shava the limp god: two-faced and mirror-sexed: twins of the flux, twined in the cosmos:

Shadow of scissors on their loins, lying with shadow of goblet full, sharp-showing, wine-brimming, and one bare knife, too blunt in her palm shut:

Woman, woman delivered and deliverer: trampling as the hooves of the herd, unheeding: bearing, burying: drunk with her blackness: a-dance with her black juice: heels hard on Shiva's flesh, flesh hard on Shava's thighs and her dark red tongue, lolling harsh on the lips' loll, raw —

As the phallus long, riding the white teeth ridden: long, the point, delicate: wetting her chin-fuzz . . .

JOSEPH E. DEWEY:

The Tercel's Visit

On an afternoon involving
The tangled flight of sparrows,
The peacocks poised upon the terrace
And neatly strung from beak to beak
A geometrical net of wiry conversation
While a disinterested sun decorated
The situation
Transforming every fold of taffeta.

On such an afternoon
A young falcon drifted in
With an insolence in his eyes
That caused the faintest droplets
To appear on creamy brows,
Drifted in and, settling,
Caused a silk to bloom,
Here and there
A hair to lift from place.

The bird had slipped his thong.
Escaping some leather-bound wrist,
Had wrenched the air with unclipped wings;

Had brought a sea smell,
Flecks of glinting salt
Upon his beak
And, probably,
Proud talk.

And he diverted them there,
As the sun finished the day,
And musing on their brilliant markings,
Spoke words of the diamond surfaces of seas
And observations on the fretwork of vast flatlands —
Until supper should be served.

Then, knowing darkness to be inevitable,
Sat silent, mindful
Of the grey meat that so packed
The socket of his skull,
But sat, centered,
In the gleaming web of their speech
Where the clockwork motions
Made the silk so scratch his wings
To inflammation
That at dinner
He quite devoured them.

Yet the falling of their smooth pink bones
To the flagstones made a chiming
That wholly charmed him
And, in leaving,
He cast a dropped silk over that intricate pile,
Rose up the airy stair with gentle grace,
And observed the mauve tent undisturbed —
Its concave facets reflecting the light
Of an unfeeling moon.

Rose and returned to find
The hide-bound, patient, searching wrist —
The escutcheoned halls, the loping mastiffs
And the rich
Red meat.

HERMANN HESSE:

The Poet

Translated by S. Leonard Rubinstein

It is told that the Chinese poet, Han Fook, was possessed in his youth by a wondrous impulsion to learn wholly and to fulfill completely in himself all things pertaining to the art of poetry. While he yet lived in his home by the Yellow River he became engaged, by his own wish and with the help of his parents who loved him tenderly, to a young lady of distinguished family, the wedding to be confirmed soon on a day of good omen. Han Fook was then about twenty years old and a handsome youth, modest and with pleasing social qualities, conversant in the sciences, and, despite his youth, already well-known among the literati of the land by virtue of many excellent poems. Without being rich, he was developing a comfortable resource, which with the dowry of his bride would be even greater — add to this the fact that this bride was very beautiful and virtuous and it would seem that nothing was wanting in the young man's happiness. Yet, he was not wholly satisfied, for his heart was filled with the passion to become a perfect poet.

So it happened that one evening, while a lantern festival was taking place on the river, Han Fook wandered alone on the far bank. He leaned on the trunk of a tree which bowed over the water, and saw countless lights swimming and trembling in the mirror of the stream; he saw upon the boats and floats men and women and girls greeting each other, their festive clothing gleaming like beautiful flowers; he heard the weak murmur of the illumined water, the melody of the singers, the whir of the zither, the sweet tones of the flute players, and he saw the dark-blue night soaring above all as the vault of a temple. As he contemplated all this beauty, a solitary spectator faithful to his spirit, his heart pounded. And the more he desired to cross over and enjoy the festival in the presence of his bride and his friends, the more ardently he aspired to encompass all this as a meticulous observer, and in a consummate poem to mirror it all once again: the blue of the night and the play of light in the water, the lusty humor of the festival guests, and the yearning nostalgia of the quiet watcher who rested against the trunk of the tree which leaned over the bank. He sensed

that he could never be serene and well in heart despite all the festivals and delights of this Earth—, and also that he, in the midst of life, would remain a solitary, in some way always an observer and a stranger; he divined that his soul, alone among the many others, was so shaped that he was inescapably to feel both the beauties of earth and the secret longings of alien worlds at the same time. In this he was sad, and meditated the matter through, and the effect of his thought was this: that true happiness and deep satisfaction could be his portion only if he could once succeed so wholly in poems to capture the world that he would possess in these mirror-portraits the world itself, resounding and immortal.

Han Fook hardly knew whether he were awake or slumbering when he heard a gentle rustle and saw, standing near the bole of the tree, a stranger garbed in violet and venerable in countenance. Han Fook recalled himself and greeted the man with the greeting reserved for the aged and the distinguished; the stranger smiled, however, and spoke some verses, wherein was all the young man had just envisioned, so completely and beautifully composed after the dicta of the great poets that the heart of the youth stood still in astonishment.

"Oh, who are you," he cried, bowing low, "that you can see into my soul and render verses of greater beauty than any I have heard from all my masters?"

The stranger smiled again with the smile of the fulfilled and said: "If you long to be a poet, then come to me. You will find my dwelling in the northwestern mountains at the source of the great river. My name is Master of the Wholly-Perfect Word."

Thereupon the old man stepped into the narrow shadow of the tree and disappeared; Han Fook, who searched for him in vain, finding not the slightest trace, now firmly believed that it was all a dream born of weariness. He hurried across to the boats and took part in the festival, but between converse and the music of the flutes, he returned ever to the mystical voice of the old man, with whom Han's soul seemed to have gone, and he sat, strange and with dreaming eyes, amidst the revellers who teased him with his lover's trance.

A few days later, Han Fook's father wanted to call together his friends and relatives to determine the day of the wedding. This the bridegroom opposed, saying: "Forgive me if I seem to transgress the obedience the son owes the father. But you know how much it is my desire to distinguish myself in the art of the poet, and even though some of my friends praise my poems, I know well I am but a beginner,

still on the first steps of the way. I beg you, let me go for yet a while in singleness and immerse myself in my studies, for it seems to me that when I have a wife and a home to govern, it will restrain me from these things. Now, however, I am still young and without other duties, and I want to live for a time for my art alone, from which I hope for happiness and fame."

This speech plunged the father into astonishment, and he said: "This art must be indeed your love above all, if, on this account, you want to delay your marriage. But if something has come between you and your bride, then tell me, that I can help you to appease her — or help you to get another."

The son swore that he loved his intended no less than yesterday or ever, and that not the shadow of a quarrel had fallen between them. Then he told his father that on the day of the Lamp-Festival a master had revealed himself to Han in a dream, and that to be the student of this master was his wish, more greatly desired than all the pleasures of the world.

"Well," said the father, "I give you a year. In this time you may follow your dream, a dream sent you, perhaps, by a god."

"It might also take two years," said Han Fook, slowly. "Who can know?"

The father was troubled and let him go; the youth, however, wrote his intended a letter bidding her farewell, and departed.

After wandering very far, he reached the source of the river and found a bamboo hut standing in great solitude, and before the hut on a woven mat sat the old man he had seen on the bank by the tree. The old man sat and played the lute, and when he saw his guest reverently approach, he neither rose nor greeted him, but smiled and let his slender fingers run over the strings, and an enchanting music floated like a silver cloud through the dell, and the youth stood in awe and forgot in sweet amazement all else until the Master of the Wholly-Perfect Word laid the little lute aside and entered the hut. With veneration, Han Fook followed him and remained with him as servant and student.

A month passed and he learned to despise all the songs he had composed before, and he extinguished them from his memory. And after some months, he extinguished, too, from his memory the songs his teachers at home had taught him. The Master spoke hardly a word to him; without words he taught him the art of lute-playing until the very being of the student flowed with music. Once Han Fook com-

posed a small poem picturing the flight of two birds in the autumn sky, and this pleased him well. He did not dare to show it to the Master, but he sang it one evening outside the hut and the Master heard it with grace. He said not a word. He played softly on his lute, and immediately the air was cool and twilight quickened, a sharp wind rose, though it was midsummer, and through a transformed sky of grey two herons flew in majestic wander-yearning, and all this was so much more beautiful and complete than the verse of the student that he became sad and was silent, feeling himself wordless. This the Ancient did each time, and when the year was gone, Han Fook had learned to play the lute almost perfectly, but the art of poetry seemed to him ever more difficult, ever loftier.

When two years were gone, the youth felt an aching nostalgia for his kin, for his home, and for his bride, and he asked the Master for permission to journey home.

The Master smiled and nodded. "You are free," he said, "and may go where you will. You may come back, you may remain away, exactly as it pleases you."

Han Fook set out and traveled without rest until one morning in the dawn he stood on the familiar bank and gazed across the arching bridge and saw his native city. He stole secretly into his father's garden and, through the window of the bedroom, heard his father breathing in his sleep; and then he slipped into the orchard beside the home of his bride, and from the top of a pear tree which he climbed, saw his bride in her room rise and comb her hair. And it became clear to him as he compared what he saw with the pictures he had painted in his homesickness that he was fated to be a poet, and he realized that in the dreams of a poet there lived a beauty and a sadness for which one searched among the objects of actuality in vain. He climbed down from the tree and fled from the garden across the bridge out of his native city and turned back to the high dale in the mountains. There the aged Master sat, as of old, upon the humble mat before his hut, and struck the lute with his fingers, and in place of a greeting, spoke two verses on the blessings of art, which in their deepness and melody filled the eyes of the youth with tears.

Again Han Fook rested with the Master of the Wholly-Perfect Word, who taught him, now that he had mastered the lute, in the zither, and months disappeared like snow in the west wind. Twice more homesickness overcame Han Fook. The first time he slipped secretly away in the night, but before he had reached the last winding of the valley, the night wind ran over the zither which hung in the

doorway of the hut, and the tones flowed after him and called him back so sweetly he could not resist. The second time he dreamed he planted a tree and his wife stood beside him and his children poured wine and milk upon the tree. When he awoke the moon was shining in his room, and he rose in distraction and saw nearby the Master lying in slumber, his grey beard gently trembling; a bitter hate filled him against this man, who, it seemed to him, had destroyed his life and cheated him of his future. He wanted to hurl himself upon the old man and murder him; the eyes of the aged Master opened and began to smile with a fine and sad gentleness which disarmed the student.

"Remember, Han Fook," the Ancient said softly, "you are free to do as you desire. You may go to your homeland and plant trees, you may hate me and strike me, there is no proscription laid against it."

"Oh, how can I hate you!" cried the poet, greatly moved. "It would be as if I wanted to hate heaven itself."

And he stayed and learned to play the zither and then the flute, and later, under the Master's guidance, he began to make poems, and he learned slowly each secret art, seemingly saying only the simple and the plain, yet raging in the soul of the listener like wind in still water. He described the coming of the sun as it hesitates on the rim of the mountains, and the noiseless hush of fish as they flit like shadows under the water, and the sway of a young meadow in the spring wind, and when men heard it, it was not alone the sun and the play of fishes and the flurry of the meadow, each time it seemed to sound for an instant of transcendent music the harmony of heaven and earth, and each listener thought thereupon with joy or pain of that which he loved or hated: the child, of play; the youth, of his beloved; and the aged, of death.

Han Fook no longer knew how many years he passed with the Master at the source of the great river; often it seemed to him that it was yesterday evening he stepped into this dale and was captured by the sounding strings of the old one; often, too, it was to him as if time and mortality had fallen from him and had ceased to be.

So he awoke one morning alone in the hut, and though he searched and called, the Master was vanished. Overnight fall seemed suddenly to descend, a raw wind rattled the old hut, and over the ridge of the mountains flew great flocks of migrant birds, although it was not yet their time.

Then Han Fook took his small lute and descended into his homeland, and wherever he met men, they greeted him with the greeting reserved for the aged and the distinguished, and when he entered his

native city, he found that his father and his bride and his kin had died, and other men lived in their houses. In the evening, however, a lamp-festival was celebrated by the river, and the poet Han Fook stood on the other side upon the shadowed shore and leaned upon the trunk of an aged tree, and when he began to play upon the tiny lute, the women sighed and stared, anguished and enraptured, into the night, and the young men called after the lute player, whom they could not find, and called loudly that they had never heard from anyone before such tones from a lute. Han Fook gazed into the river where swam the mirrors of a thousand lamps, and when he could no longer separate the mirrored lights from the actual ones, then he found in his soul no difference between this festival and the first one, when he had stood here as a youth, and had taken unto himself the word of the Master-Stranger.

BEATRICE E. BODENSTEIN:

The Feast of Fiction

The brother was the only member at a feast
In a parable of friends.
From old wrongheaded harborings
Of all the marvelous fiction
About the happening of things to places
He sliced his portion
But the lonely version of his eating turned to hunger.

Fasting is a prayer's wing
Said one of the old voices in the world.

His prayer amid the loneliness and litter
Was all delay and drifting feathers.
There is such division between here and there
That fiction happens to believers only
Said the lonely brother.
All the bright feast of a tale I hoard,
And hunger for feasting brothers.

ROY MARZ:

The Bur

Fig-fashioned Brother Rufus
Preferred to wash a man in typhus
Or pass ladies with tittering fans

Than walk the cloister from Primes to Matins
And feel his beard rise at the mullens
Where the sly thing wriggled its loins.

It was small but it was Eve,
Intimate as snow, and the Devil
Because it spoke like a man in Latin.

"None like the damned can love the blest.
I bed with the damned Evangelist
Who slept on the innocent breast of Christ."

It pulled its knees up to its chin,
It curled to a bur, laughing for pain
Spastic among the shocked mullens.

Brother Rufus rocked in the chapel
Plucking a neume as a saint's nipple,
Christ-calling over the chant.

Francis turned from his feeding Dove.
He wiped the sick beard with his sleeve
But missed the bur stuck over the heart.

How could he know, key-sure, houseled,
Locking the lost one to his breast,
Deeper the pain and madness cut?

Cable to Florence

This cable from Mary Parr with its quasi inference
Says her mother died last night at eleven:
Eleven in Mary Parr is morning in Florence.

So how can I really know if the death impinged
On where I slept last night or this morning woke,
Or how I change in the life this death changed,

Or understand this urgency to tally
Life and death at a distance. Did Mary fear
I would think of her mother alive at the Campanile?

How could the gross error offend the ghost,
Or how the correction make it the less lost?
But there is a meaning in our curious haste

To tell who no longer lives: the informed yews
Perceive by my news that they grow only to grieve
For a woman they nor I encountered alive,

And now in them and me intently alive.

Dead Mrs. Parr, who never went far from home,
How do you like it abroad? Here in the Duomo
Let us recite a prayer for our stricken Mary.

We choose the prayer image. (Not you, Mary Parr:
In the quick smell, Italian or incense, your mother,
Stiff last night or this morning, and I concur

In image of dust rags that were aprons and dresses,
Squares of remembered flowers in the kitchen box,
Anthology of home in our foreign places.)

In prayer we stare at a smutch on our Lady's chin.
(Mary, what is belief? They believe each other,
They stare at each other and nod that they are each other.)

We pray, and mark the distress of the untidy Lady:
The mother so neatly dead takes a rag from our prayer
And touches the dead mother of anybody.

Lost in the square, Mother of Mary lost,
Lost I bargain for gifts in the dark shops:
What shall I bring you, a purse or a small Christ?

MARTIN SCHOLTEN:

Promenade of an Elegant Ego

Mais, ô mon coeur, entends le chant des matelots!
— Mallarmé

Suavely accoutered with pearl-gray hat and cane
Ornately tipped, he saunters on the quay:
Supposed of course an immaculate entity,
A little world that can all worlds contain:
And ponders swooping gull with slight ennui.

Amid the brouhaha of air-swung bales,
Winch-clatter, gamins' cries and whistles' blare
He moves precise and singular: each stare
That might impose a dissonance impaled
On the disdainful point of cane in air.

Bringing to that scene the gestures of a mind
As delicately poised as Madame's fan,
He moves in measured syllables through sun
Or shadow's pale; and yet the soft sea-wind
Insinuates a doubt that will not scan:

Wafts him to islands foreign to this cape
And sheltered sea, to a disquieting throng
Of images bespeaking now the gong
Tolling a wreck and now the plaintive hope
The heart would harbor in a sailor's song.

CONTRIBUTORS

BEATRICE E. BODENSTEIN is studying for a master's degree in English at Columbia.

JOSEPH E. DEWEY, of Essex, Conn., will do graduate work in creative writing at Iowa this fall. This is his first appearance in a national magazine.

WALLACE FOWLIE is completing a critical study of *Les Illuminations.*

HERMANN HESSE, author of *Blick ins Chaos, Demian,* and *Steppenwolf,* among other works, and winner of the Nobel Prize for 1946, lives in Switzerland.

JASCHA KESSLER is finishing his Ph.D. at Michigan, where he has received a Hopwood Award in poetry. "The Dowry" is his first published story.

ROY MARZ. on leave from Butler University, is in Florence as a Ford Foundation Fellow, studying modern Italian poetry. His poems have appeared in *Kenyon Review, Partisan Review, Epoch,* etc.

S. LEONARD RUBINSTEIN lives in Salem, N. J.

MARTIN SCHOLTEN, who first appeared in the quarterly in 1949, teaches English at Toledo University.

PARKER TYLER is well-known as a poet and as a critic of poetry and films.

T. WEISS is the editor of *Quarterly Review of Literature* and the author of a book of poems, *The Catch.*

KARL E. ZINK is a member of the English faculty at the University of Washington.

SUPERIOR PRINTING SERVICES . . .

CAN ONLY BE PRODUCED BY MODERN EQUIPMENT — SKILLED CRAFTSMEN AND A COMPLETE ASSORTMENT OF TYPE FACES —

These essential Elements are all Available for Publication and Commercial Printing at

FLANIGAN-PEARSON CO.

10-12 Chester Street

Phone 3994 Champaign, Ill.